Animal models of autoimmunity, particularly mouse models, have been invaluable tools to the study of human SLE (1). Both share serologic and pathologic abnormalities, although human and murine SLE may differ in manner of expression (2). Since the etiology of both human and murine SLE remains unknown, it remains to be determined whether they share common etiologic factors and if the conclusions from the study of murine SLE will be directly applicable to the human counterpart. The recent report of long-term engraftment of human lymphoid cells, particularly functional human PBL into SCID mice (3,4), prompted us to study the effect of the PBL transfer from SLE patients into SCID mice (SCID-hu-SLE), in an attempt to create a human SLE model that could be manipulated within the context of a laboratory animal.

Materials and Methods

**Cell Transfer.** PBL from healthy donors or SLE patients were isolated by Ficoll Hypaque separation. Within 6 h of drawing, 15 x 10^6 PBL were injected intraperitoneally into 8-wk-old nonleaky C.B-17 scid/scid (SCID) mice. A successful reconstitution was considered if the level of human IgG in the mouse was >1,000 μg/ml in 90 d or less after the cell transfer. We included one SCID-hu-SLE mouse (No. 10, see Results and Discussion) that, although not fulfilling our criteria for a good reconstitution, displayed a high antinuclear antibody (ANA) titer.

**Human Ig Level Determination.** Human IgG and IgM were quantified as described using a modification of the particle concentration fluorescence immunosassay procedure of Jolley et al. (5). Briefly, polystyrene particles previously adsorbed with a polyvalent, mouse-absorbed, goat anti-human Ig (Caltag, South San Francisco, CA) were incubated with serum samples or respective standards of human IgG, Fx II (Pentex 46), or human IgM (Calbiochem-Behring Corp., San Diego, CA). Bound IgG or IgM were revealed using an Fc-specific goat anti-human IgG, or a goat anti-human IgM conjugated to FITC (Caltag), respectively. These manipulations were performed in special assay plates using an automated fluorescent concentrated analyzer (Pandex Laboratories, Inc., Mundelein, IL).

**Human ANA Titer Determination.** Serum human ANA titers were determined using HEP-2 cells as a substrate (Bion Enterprises, Ltd., Park Ridge, IL), and specific human ANA were revealed using a Burro anti-human total Ig conjugated to fluorescein (Kallestad Diagnostics, Austin, TX). The human ANA isotypes were determined using the same procedure; the ANA were revealed with the FITC-conjugated antibodies described in the human Ig level determination section. Slides were examined under an Olympus BH2-RFL microscope equipped with a reflected light fluorescence illuminator (Olympus, Tokyo, Japan).

**Histology.** Tissues were fixed in Bouins fixative, paraffin embedded, and 4-μm sections were stained with periodic acid Schiff (A). Alternatively, unfixed frozen sections were incubated with a Burro anti-human total Ig conjugated to fluorescein (Kallestad Diagnostics) (B), a goat anti-mouse C3 (Cappel Laboratories, Malvern, PA), or an anti-human C3, and examined under reflected light fluorescence.

Results and Discussion

15 SCID mice were injected intraperitoneally with 15 x 10^6 PBL from 5 SLE patients (SCID-hu-SLE), and 9 mice were injected with 15 x 10^6 PBL from 3 normal donors (SCID-hu), and bled periodically thereafter. As depicted in Table 1, such reconstituted mice showed long-term presence...
mice and the majority of patient ANA were positive for IgG only. The exceptions were donor 4 and mouse 2, who presented equal re-
titer (1:100). The ANA titers of 29 SCID-hu mice repopulated with
PBL from three different donors were 1:10 in 5 mice, 1:2 in 7, and
negative at 1:2 in 17.

FRCS analysis on PBL from SCID-hu mice demonstrates
the presence of human B and T cells (representing up to 15%
of the total PBMC population). Among T cells, the ratio
of CD4+CD8-/CD4-CD8+ at 1 and 2 mo post-engraft-
ment are 3:1, and 1:2, respectively (data not shown). Human
ANA titers reflecting those of the SLE donors were found
in the 15 SCID-hu-SLE mice, while little or no such anti-
body was found in 29 SCID-hu mice, comprising the 9
depicted in Table 1 (Fig. 1, legend). This ANA must have
been produced by the transferred cells in the murine host
since the cells had been well washed to eliminate contaminating
antibody, and since it persisted well beyond the time expected
for passive antibody transfer (half-life of human IgG and IgM
in the SCID recipient are 184 and 108 h, respectively; data
not shown). The SCID-hu-SLE mice had a ratio of ANA
titers to human IgG levels of the same order of magnitude
as the SLE patient donors, and, as in the donors, the ANA
autoantibodies are primarily of the IgG isotype (Fig. 1, legend).

Table 1. Quantitation of Human IgG and IgM Levels (µg/ml) in SCID-hu-SLE and SCID-hu Mice

| SCID-hu | D15  | D30  | D60  | D90  | D120 | D150 | D180 | D270 |
|---------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| SLE     |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| No. 1   | 122/2.4 | 703/3.6 | 1,277/14.0 | 1,320/8.9 | 2,165/78.0 | 959/4.0 | 573/1.2 | 363/0.3 |
| 2       | 253/2.8 | 1,398/22.0 | 1,710/66.0 | 1,282/47.0 | 992/27.0 | 719/13.0 | 594/9.2 | 265/2.2 |
| 3       | 185/3.0 | 760/9.6 | 865/56.0 | 1,222/120.0 | 917/105.0 | - | - | - |
| 4       | 265/1.8 | 1,065/6.9 | 2,041/112.0 | 2,701/249.0 | 1,689/101.0 | - | - | - |
| 5       | 182/2.8 | 1,657/32.0 | 3,002/283.0 | 2,944/133.0 | 1,200/7.8 | 1,211/35.0 | 982/16.0 | 484/2.0 |
| 6       | 932/16.0 | 1,968/11.0 | 1,359/10.0 | 1,210/5.8 | 1,004/2.9 | 573/2.2 | 744/2.1 | - |
| 7       | 3,222/41.0 | 3,191/18.0 | 2,691/38.0 | 2,548/42.0 | 1,662/15.0 | 1,007/11.0 | 1,120/8.5 | 261/2.2 |
| 8       | 3,557/35.0 | 2,488/22.0 | 2,714/71.0 | - | - | - | - | - |
| 9       | 3,555/21.0 | 2,148/8.4 | 2,419/90.0 | 855/1,984* | - | - | - | - |
| 10      | 164/0.7 | 247/0.3 | 298/11.0 | 261/1,004* | 136/2,803* | - | - | - |
| 11      | 2,858/54.0 | 2,337/12.0 | 3,512/13.0 | 1,498/9.7 | 762/5.4 | 393/2.6 | 248/1.2 | - |
| 12      | 2,288/55.0 | 2427/15.0 | 2,569/7.6 | 2,237/7.1 | 1,476/19.0 | 2,168/36.0 | 1,342/24.0 | - |
| 13      | 1,863/36.0 | 2,045/18.0 | 2,050/11.0 | 1,121/6.0 | 566/2.9 | 334/3.1 | 207/9.2 | - |
| 14      | 1,160/14.0 | 1,375/20.0 | 1,654/31.0 | 705/7.8 | 492/4.2 | 467/2.2 | 195/1.1 | - |
| 15      | 1,827/34.0 | 1,897/7.9 | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| SCID-hu | 884/3.4 | 918/13.5 | 1,643/17.2 | 1,776/20.6 | 1,394/22.2 | 1,037/4.6 | 775/7.3 | 118/0.5 |

Determination of human IgG/IgM levels 15, 30, 60, 90, 120, 150, 180, and 270 d after engraftment of human PBL. - , dead.
* SCID-hu-SLE mice 9 and 10 developed human lymphoma, which caused their death. These two mice have not been included in the histolo-
gy/immunofluorescent kidney results.
1 For comparison the mean human IgG/IgM level of nine SCID-hu mice is included.

Figure 1. Evolution of human ANA titers in SCID-hu-SLE mice. Mouse 1 (■), donor 1 ANA titer 1:2,240; Mouse 2-3 (□), donor 2
ANA titer 1:1,600; Mice 6-9 (□), donor 3 ANA titer 1:320; Mouse 10 (□), donor 4 ANA titer 1:4,480; Mice 11-15 (□) donor 5 ANA
titer 1:640. Some mice demonstrated human ANA titers of 1:1,000
and 1:3000 and are represented by histograms with titers higher than
titer 1:300. When tested for IgG and IgM isotypes, all SCID-hu-SLE
mice and the majority of patient ANA were positive for IgG only.
The exceptions were donor 4 and mouse 2, who presented equal re-
activity for both IgG and IgM ANA, and donor 2, whose ANA
were mainly of the IgG isotype but presented also low IgM ANA
titer (1:100). The ANA titers of 29 SCID-hu mice repopulated with
PBL from three different donors were 1:10 in 5 mice, 1:2 in 7, and
negative at 1:2 in 17.

of human IgG, reaching maximum levels ~2 mo after transfer
and then gradually declining over the next 4–7 mo, although
great individual variety exists. At maximum values, the human
IgG levels in the mice were approximately one-fifth of the
normal human levels. The evolution of human IgM in the
SCID recipient was more variable than that of human IgG,
as illustrated in Table 1.

FACS analysis on PBL from SCID-hu mice demonstrates
the presence of human B and T cells (representing up to 15%
of the total PBMC population). Among T cells, the ratio
of CD4+CD8-/CD4-CD8+ at 1 and 2 mo post-engraft-
ment are 3:1, and 1:2, respectively (data not shown). Human
ANA titers reflecting those of the SLE donors were found
in the 15 SCID-hu-SLE mice, while little or no such anti-
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It appears that the cells transferred from the peripheral blood of afflicted patients have already undergone IgM to IgG switching in their ANA production. Such IgG anti-DNA autoantibodies are believed to be the primary pathogens in mice as well as in humans (6, 7).

The persistence of antibody synthesis by autoreactive clones in the SCID-hu-SLE model might be secondary to the presence of human or murine antigen(s). The additional possibility that this B cell population is polyclonally stimulated in this model cannot be excluded. ANA titers in some SCID-hu-SLE mice were maintained up to 7 mo, although the majority decreased by 3–4 mo post-engraftment. Although there is variability between individual mice, the general ratio of ANA titer vs. human IgG decreased with time. This decreased ANA production may reflect the lifespan of the B cell autoreactive clones in the model, and/or the termination of B cell stimulation in the murine reconstituted human immune system. The progressive loss of CD4⁺CD8⁻ human T cell subset in SCID-hu recipients, strongly implicated in the stimulation of IgG autoantibody-producing B cells in human and mouse (8, 9), might play an important role in the autoantibody decline in this model.

Autoantibodies in SLE patients form immune complexes detectable in the circulation and target organs, such as kidneys (2). We examined seven kidney biopsies from SCID-hu-SLE mice, and four from SCID-hu mice. Conventional histologic examination revealed no alteration in the SCID-hu model, and only minimal mesangial proliferation in the SCID-hu-SLE model (data not shown). Immunofluorescence studies on six of seven SCID-hu-SLE kidney biopsies showed the presence of granular deposits of human Ig in a pattern suggestive of mesangial and capillary loop distribution (Fig. 2 A). Half of those kidneys positive for human Ig were also positive for mouse C3 (Fig. 2 C). SCID-hu mice do not present such Ig or mouse C3 deposits in their glomeruli (Fig. 2, B and D). All kidneys examined were negative for human C3 (data not shown). The lack, or minimal activation of, this important effector pathway of the immune response, as well as the relatively short time of autoantibody production, might explain the paucity of lesions seen on conventional histology, as well as the absence of significant proteinuria or elevated BUN level in SCID-hu-SLE mice (data not shown).

In summary, we report the first transfer of human SLE serology and some glomerular pathology into SCID mice. This new in vivo model expands our potential to directly evaluate the influence of cellular and humoral functions in the progression of this disease. In addition, this ability to transfer PBL from one donor into multiple mice allows us to compare various potential therapies simultaneously on the disease-producing cells of a single patient.

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