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EVENT ABSTRACT

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Human macrophages release higher IL-1 α over IL-1 β when stimulated by block acetylated chitosan microparticles and not by random acetylated chitosans or water-soluble oligomers

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Introduction: Human macrophages were previously shown to release excess IL-1 α over IL-1 β when stimulated by chitosan microparticles (140 kDa, 80% glucosamine and 20% block N-acetyl glucosamine, 80% degree of deacetylation (DDA))^[1]. These data suggest the potential of using chitosan to treat knee joint inflammation by guiding the *in situ* release of immunomodulatory cytokines. The purpose of this study was to identify the minimal chitosan motif required to induce higher IL-1 α release, using a U937 human macrophage model and a novel chitosan library with distinct DDA, acetylation patterns, and array of 5 different number-average molecular weights (M_n).

Materials and Methods: 15 chitosans with different M_n , DDA, and block (B) or random (R) acetylation pattern were generated, including acid-soluble \geq 140 kDa and 10 kDa chitosans, and water-soluble 1, 3, 5 kDa oligomers (Table 1). B-acetylated (80% DDA, $M_n=190$ kDa) or fully deacetylated (98% DDA, $M_n=140$ kDa) chitosans were nitrous acid depolymerized. 98% DDA chitosans were reacetylated to 60% or 80% DDA to obtain R-acetylated chitosans. Chitosan M_n and polydispersity were determined by size exclusion chromatography and DDA by H¹ NMR. Phorbol ester-differentiated U937 macrophages were stimulated for 24 hours with 5, 50 or 150 μ g/mL chitosans that form particles in culture medium at an $M_n \geq 10$ kDa, or with LPS and IL-4 as controls. Cell culture medium was analyzed for cytokine release by ELISA (N=3). Cell cytotoxicity was determined by lactate dehydrogenase release.

Chitosan	DDA (%)	Acetylation Pattern	Number average Mw (kDa)
80-190K-B	82	Block	188
80-10K-B	83	Block	11
80-5K-B	81	Block	5
80-3K-B	83	Block	3
80-1K-B	80	Block	1
80-140K-R	80	Random	144
80-10K-R	80	Random	11
80-5K-R	81	Random	5
80-3K-R	81	Random	3
80-1K-R	81	Random	1
60-140K-R	65	Random	152
60-10K-R	62	Random	16
60-5K-R	53	Random	4
60-3K-R	59	Random	3
60-1K-R	61	Random	1

Table 1: Chitosans generated and analyzed in this study

Results: Macrophages with no stimulation released high levels of IL-1 α (5364 ± 1720 pg/mL) and negligible levels of IL-1 β (56 ± 6 pg/mL). Amongst all chitosans, only the B-acetylated 80% DDA 190 kDa chitosan (80-190K-B) stimulated a reproducible 2 to 3-fold increase in IL-1 α release at selected doses (Fig. 1A). The B-acetylated 80% DDA 10 and 190 kDa chitosans stimulated a 2 to 5-fold increase in IL-1 β release (Fig. 1B). In contrast, R-acetylated 80% DDA 140 kDa (80-140K-R) chitosan induced a modest 2-fold increase in IL-1 β without further enhancing IL-1 α release (Fig. 1). All other chitosans had no effects on cytokine release at any dose. Cell viability remained over 80% under all conditions.

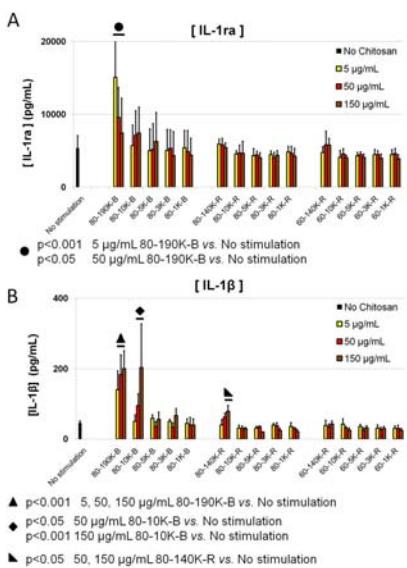


Figure 1: Release of (A) IL-1 α and (B) IL-1 β by U937 macrophages in response to the chitosan library. Macrophages stimulated with LPS released 126±18 ng/mL IL-1 α and 560±213 pg/mL IL-1 β , while macrophages stimulated with IL-4 released 102±13 ng/mL IL-1 α and 13±0.2 pg/mL IL-1 β . Data show mean ± standard deviation. N=3

Discussion: The failure of the 1 to 5 kDa B-acetylated chitosans to induce any cytokine release indicates that there is a minimal M_n required for chitosan to stimulate IL-1 β in macrophages and suggests full cytocompatibility of chitosan oligomers at 150 µg/mL. At 80% DDA and above 10 kDa M_n, the B-acetylation pattern contributes to stimulating IL-1 β release. These data are consistent with previous report suggesting that chitosan microparticle formation is necessary to activate the inflammasome and stimulate IL-1 β liberation from macrophages^[2]. The ability of the 80-190K-B, and not the 80-140K-R, to enhance IL-1 α release indicates that the B-acetylation pattern is necessary to shift macrophages towards a more anabolic phenotype.

Conclusion: A novel, comprehensive chitosan library was successfully generated to evaluate the impact of chitosan M_n, DDA and acetylation pattern on cytokine release in human macrophages. Water-soluble chitosan oligomers had no influence on IL-1 α and IL-1 β release. Above 100 kDa, 80% DDA B-acetylated but not R-acetylated chitosans stimulated more IL-1 α , suggesting that B-acetylated chitosans are more useful for inducing the release of anti-inflammatory factors that preserve joint health.

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