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Gastroenterology Symposium
Putting the Puzzle Together: Inflammation and Gastrointestinal Disease

September 16 – 17, 2016
University Hospital Regensburg
Regensburg, Germany

Abstracts
Abstracts of Invited Lectures

Gastroenterology Symposium

PUTTING THE PUZZLE TOGETHER:
INFLAMMATION AND
GASTROINTESTINAL DISEASE

Regensburg (Germany)
September 16 – 17, 2016

Scientific Organization:
M. Fleck, Regensburg (Germany)
H. Herfarth, Chapel Hill (USA)
G. Rogler, Zurich (Switzerland)
B. Salzberger, Regensburg (Germany)
CONTENTS

Session I

Hepatitis, pancreatitis and systemic inflammation

Chair:
K.-P. Maier, Esslingen
M. Müller-Schilling, Regensburg

The revolution in HCV therapy
F. von Weizsäcker, Berlin 9

Impact of hepatitis C virus NS3/4A and NS5A variants on treatment response
S. Zeuzem, Frankfurt 10

Autoimmune pancreatitis – The chameleon of GI diseases
G. Beyer, J. Mayerle, M.M. Lerch, Greifswald 11 – 14

The role of inflammatory mediators during organ failure in portal hypertension
A.L. Gerbes, Munich 15

Session II

Standards and developments of IBD therapy

Chair:
W.E. Fleig, Leipzig
D.K. Podolsky, Dallas

Aminosalicylates, budesonide and Co: Standards and new approaches
S.B. Hanauer, Chicago 19

Trough level directed therapy in IBD
I.E. Koutroubakis, Heraklion 20

Is there a standard approach for post-surgical Crohn’s disease?
A. Dignass, Frankfurt 21

Azathioprine and methotrexate: Getting dusty?
H. Herfarth, Chapel Hill 22 – 23
New concepts for treatment – Lessons learned
C. Fiocchi, Cleveland 24 – 25

Session III

Infections and the GI tract

Chair:
J. Hacker, Halle
J. Mössner, Leipzig

Impact of HIV on intestinal function
B. Salzberger, Regensburg 29

CMV colitis – Infectious complication or bystander in IBD
G.J. Mantzaris, Athens 30

Clostridium difficile and fecal transplantation
G. Rogler, Zurich 31 – 32

Infections and GI cancer
E.M. El-Omar, Sydney 33

Session IV

Rheumatic diseases and the gut

Chair:
U.R. Fölsch, Kiel
T. Sauerbruch, Bonn

The gut microbiota: It’s role in rheumatoid arthritis and other inflammatory diseases
R.B. Sartor, Chapel Hill 37

Ankylosing spondylitis and the gut: What is the connection?
E. Märker-Hermann, Wiesbaden 38

Whipple’s disease mimicking seronegative rheumatic diseases
M. Fleck, bad Abbach 39

Redistribution of energy: Novel targets of intervention
R.H. Straub, Regensburg 40 – 41
Session V

**Endocrinology and inflammation**

Chair:
R.C. Spiller, Nottingham
R. Tauber, Berlin

Is diabetes an inflammatory disease and should it be treated like that?
A. Schäffler, Giessen

Does fat cause inflammation? Metabolic syndrome and NASH
S. Bellentani, Locarno

Mediators derived from fat tissue and their impact on systemic disease: Treatment targets in the future?
B. Siegmund, Berlin

Mesenteric lymphatic changes in Crohn’s disease
G.J. Randolph, St. Louis; J.-F. Colombel, New York

Session VI

**Inflammation, drugs and cancer**

Chair:
A. Vollmar, Munich
A.J.M. Watson, Norwich

Inflammation and colon cancer – Harnessing the immune system in diagnosis and treatment
B. Jung, Chicago

5-ASA and immunosuppressants and colon cancer: Is there a role in colorectal cancer prevention?
W. Schmiegel, Bochum

Biologic therapy and paradoxical inflammation
S.R. Targan, Los Angeles

Systemic effects of inflammatory diseases – Need for cardiac monitoring? (no abstract)
A.M. Zeiher, Frankfurt
Session VII

New treatment options

Chair:  
D. Rachmilewitz, Jerusalem  
S.R. Targan, Los Angeles

Bowel transplantation in IBD (no abstract)  
M. Büchler, Heidelberg

Bile acids in the treatment of biliary, hepatic, and intestinal disease  
A.F. Hofmann, La Jolla, USA  
59 – 60

New aspects of primary biliary cholangitis, primary sclerosing cholangitis and autoimmune hepatitis  
M.P. Manns, Hannover  
61 – 62

Can we treat or reverse fibrosis?  
B. Schnabl, La Jolla  
63

New compounds for IBD treatment  
W.J. Sandborn, La Jolla  
64

New anti-inflammatory targets in rheumatology  
U. Müller-Ladner, Giessen  
65

List of Chairpersons, Speakers and Scientific Organizers  
67 – 70
Session I

Hepatitis, pancreatitis and systemic inflammation
The revolution in HCV therapy

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Some 170 million individuals worldwide are chronically infected with hepatitis C virus (HCV). The spectrum of HCV-associated diseases ranges from chronic hepatitis to liver cirrhosis and hepatocellular carcinoma. Therapy of HCV-infection is an unparalleled success story in modern medicine. In the late 80s the infection was treated as nonA-nonB-hepatitis with interferon, yielding sustained viral response (SVR) rates of merely 10%. In 1989 the virus was identified and a diagnostic test was developed. Subsequently the structures of key viral proteins were determined, thus enabling the development of small, direct antiviral agents (DAAs). Another breakthrough was the development of HCV replicons, which allow for straightforward testing of DAAs in tissue culture. Up to now a large array of DAAs is available for clinical use. To date interferon-free treatment of most HCV-genotypes is highly effective with SVR rates of > 95% and very few side effects. The aim of eradication HCV infection worldwide seems attainable, provided wide-spread distribution of antivirals and cost control.
Impact of hepatitis C virus NS3/4A and NS5A variants on treatment response

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Due to high rates of viral replication and an error prone HCV RNA polymerase, tremendous variability of HCV has been observed within infected patients (quasispecies) with all single mutations in the entire HCV genome thought to be pre-existing. Similarly, NS3/4A and NS5A RAVs are observed at baseline in patients infected with chronic HCV. The prevalence of baseline NS5A RAVs has been reported to be 6% to 16% using population sequencing (cut off 15–25%) or deep sequencing (cut off 1%), respectively. Interestingly, the prevalence and type of baseline NS5A RAVs may vary by geographic regions. For example, the prevalence of the NS5A M28V in genotype 1a-infected patients was shown to be higher in the United States compared to Europe, 7% versus 0%, respectively. Furthermore, the prevalence of genotype 3 NS5A Y93H varied between 0% and 17% in different geographic regions. A comparison of baseline prevalence of RAVs in Japanese and Western patients showed that the prevalence of Q80L and S122G in NS3, and L28M, R30Q and Y93H in NS5A was significantly higher in Japanese patients than the Western counterparts. Many currently approved interferon (IFN)-free regimens for the treatment of chronic hepatitis C (HCV) include an inhibitor of HCV NS5A. To date, there are four NS5A inhibitors approved for treatment of chronic HCV infection; ledipasvir (LDV), daclatasvir, ombitasvir, and elbasvir. The presence of baseline NS5A RAVs may impact treatment outcome of some NS5A inhibitor containing HCV regimens due to the intrinsic qualities of the NS5A inhibitor, drug pharmacology, or effects of the other compounds within the treatment regimen. To enable comparisons of resistance analyses between clinical trials, standardization of RAV definitions and sensitivity cut offs is needed. Further study is needed to understand the role of RAVs present at frequencies below 15% and whether substitutions without an in vitro susceptibility change to the NS5A inhibitor may dilute a clinical signal by RAVs that do confer reduced susceptibility to the NS5A inhibitor.
Autoimmune pancreatitis – The chameleon of GI diseases

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Introduction
A first description of chronic sclerosing pancreatitis with increased serum immunoglobulin levels was reported by Henri Sarles in the 1960s [1]. The first time the expression ‘autoimmune pancreatitis’ (AIP) was coined was by the Rostock pathologist Hans Peter Putzke [2] whereas the fully developed concept of the disease entity was formulated in Japan [3]. Initially it was thought that the disease only affects patients in Asia before reports in Europe appeared that reported similar findings and it became obvious that AIP is also found among Caucasians [4]. A large study by Günter Klöppel et al. that included 54 specimens from pancreatic resections collected in Germany, Belgium and Italy, highlighted macroscopic and microscopic features which later found their way into various diagnostic guidelines [5], namely narrowing of the pancreatic duct and common bile duct without upstream dilatation, lack of calcifications or pseudocysts and the dense lymphoplasmacytic infiltrate and periductal fibrosis that can involve the acini. It is noteworthy, that in a number of these cases “granulocytic-epithelial” lesions (GELs) were described, which were later defined as a hallmark of idiopathic duct-centric chronic pancreatitis (IDCP), the histologic description of type 2 AIP [6].

Diagnostic criteria of AIP
The correct diagnosis of AIP remains a clinical challenge. Especially the high prevalence of type 2 AIP in Europe and North America, with its lack of elevated serum IgG-4 concentrations, a broader age spectrum and a higher proportion of mass-forming lesions that mimic malignant disease, prevented a European adoption of early diagnostic guidelines, which were based on the experience in Japan [7]. Currently Japanese and Asian Consensus Criteria include imaging of pancreatic parenchyma and duct appearance, elevated serum IgG-4/autoantibodies and LPSP with IgG-4 positive plasma cells [8] and the American HiSORT criteria involve histology showing LPSP/IDCP, suggestive imaging, elevated serum IgG-4, other organ involvement and response to steroids [9], whereas the Italian criteria [10] include as main characteristics:

- Suggestive radiological features on CT or MRI (no ERCP required)
- Association with autoimmune disease
- Consistent histology (lymphoplasmacytic infiltration and GELs)
- Response to steroid therapy (clinically and on imaging)

The International Consensus Diagnostic Criteria which were introduced in 2011 combine the different approaches and allow to establish the diagnosis of AIP in accordance to regional needs and preferences [11]. For example, ductal imaging is no longer required to make the definitive diagnosis for AIP type 1 as diagnostic ERP is not commonly used in western countries. In equivocal cases it remains, however, a valuable and recommended tool.

But even with these diagnostic criteria and proposed diagnostic work-up the definitive diagnosis of AIP type 2 remains challenging. The group from the Mayo Clinic has
emphasized the importance of histologic proof and championed the use of pancreatic true-cut biopsies [12]. However, this method is still not widely available and the more commonly used EUS-guided FNA has limitations due to the sampling technique [13].

While type 2 AIP (IDCP) is more common in western countries and associated with inflammatory bowel disease, type 1 AIP (LPSP) is part of what is now called IgG-4 related syndrome [14] and can manifest with a plethora of findings in other organs. This makes it the chameleon of gastrointestinal diseases (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous name</th>
<th>Effected organ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mikulicz’s disease</td>
<td>Salivary and lacrimal gland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Küttner’s tumor</td>
<td>Submandibular gland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riedel’s thyroiditis</td>
<td>Thyroid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic sclerosing aortitis</td>
<td>Aorta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morbus Ormond</td>
<td>Retroperitoneum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autoimmune pancreatitis</td>
<td>Pancreas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sclerosing cholangitis</td>
<td>Biliary system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orbital pseudotumor</td>
<td>Orbita</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autoimmune hepatitis</td>
<td>Liver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multifocal fibrosclerosis</td>
<td>Multiple organs</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Table 1: Organ involvement of type 1 AIP and IgG-4 related disease

Treatment strategies

The first line therapy for both types of AIP is corticosteroids and virtually all cases show a satisfactory initial response. However, treatment regimens differ greatly between countries. Whereas studies from the United Kingdom and France report fixed prednisolone doses of 30 mg to 40 mg over a period of 4 weeks [15, 16], 1 mg/kg prednisolone for 2–3 weeks was given in an Italian study [17] and is commonly used in Germany. In all of these trials steroids were tapered off over a period of 2–3 months and eventually discontinued. These approaches are similar to those reported from the European centers participating in the largest international follow-up study [18]. Also the relapse rate after a steroid taper or discontinuation was similar to the international average (33% vs. 34%). A study that enrolled 102 patients from several European centers that underwent surgical treatment an overall relapse rate of 26% reported [19] which is comparable to international studies with a relapse rate of 30%.

In the case of relapsing disease most authors repeated the course of steroids with or without steroid sparing drugs. The most commonly used immunomodulator was Azathioprin but also Retuximab has now been employed in individual cases.

When estimating the need for a maintenance therapy or the risk of recurrence it needs to be remembered that type 2 AIP rarely relapses and recurrences are quite common for type 1 AIP.
References:


The role of inflammatory mediators during organ failure in portal hypertension

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Inflammation is increasingly being recognized as an important cause of organ failure in chronic liver disease. Acute decompensation of chronic liver disease and moreover, a progress towards acute-on-chronic liver failure (ACLF) have recently been characterized by a large multicenter European study (Canonic). Interestingly, inflammation was found as a trigger for development of ACLF. Likewise, patients with no previous decompensation of liver disease were more prone to develop ACLF than patients who experienced previous episodes. These findings have been interpreted as a protection conveyed by repeated hepatic or extrahepatic infections.

Looking in more detail, pathogen associated molecular patterns (PAMP) as well as damage associated molecular patterns (DAMP) seem to be of major importance. Counteraction of inflammatory signals and limitation of inflammation seem to be equally relevant in this scenario. Gut bacterial translocation has been found of particular relevance for systemic inflammatory response. In liver cirrhosis TLR-10 polymorphisms leading to a functionally impaired limitation of inflammation were just recently reported. In chronic liver disease extrahepatic inflammation and damage have been described in various cells and organs such as astrocytes and adrenal glands, respectively. However, the kidney seems to be particularly vulnerable and of major relevance regarding the overall outcome.

Altogether, inflammation and inflammatory mediators in liver disease are being recognized as a major player leading to hepatic and moreover, extrahepatic organ failure. On the basis of this increased understanding of pathophysiology novel strategies for prevention of organ failure in chronic liver disease may be developed.

References:

Session II

Standards and developments of IBD therapy
Aminosalicylates, budesonide and Co: Standards and new approaches

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Aminosalicylates are the foundational therapies for induction and maintenance of remission of mild-moderate ulcerative colitis. Over the past decades the formulations have evolved from salazopyrine to include oral formulations of mesalazine, balsalazide, and olsalazine as well as rectal formulations of mesalazine suppositories, enemas and foams. Clinical trials have demonstrated their safety and effectiveness in a variety of dose-ranges and as mono- or combinations of oral and topical approaches. Their safety profile has been valued for decades and forms a basis of comparison for all other current and potential “first line” agents.

There remain a number of controversies related to aminosalicylates including their (potential) utility for mild or superficial Crohn’s disease, as steroid-sparing agents (e.g. compared to thiopurines), and whether they should be continued in ulcerative colitis subsequent to the introduction of immune suppressives or biologic agents.

The recognized effect of corticosteroids as effective, yet toxic, inductive agents for both ulcerative colitis and Crohn’s disease has led to a quest for effective and safe glucocorticoids devoid of systemic risks. Despite earlier trials with tixocortol pivalate, fluticasone, topical betamethasone, and prednisolone metasulfobenzoate, budesonide has become the preferred compound for enteric formulations as delayed-enteric release for Crohn’s disease and oral colonic release or rectal formulations for ulcerative colitis. While attempts to develop formulations that provide topical without systemic benefits for induction of both Crohn’s disease and ulcerative colitis, budesonide formulations have yet to demonstrate long-term, effective and safe (vis a vis adrenal suppression and systemic glucocorticoid effects) benefits. Furthermore, budesonide has not been effective at prolonging post-operative remissions in Crohn’s disease nor are the clinical benefits “on top of” aminosalicylates proven to have clinically meaningful advantages in ulcerative colitis.

To date, there has been a paucity of other “first line” therapies developed for either ulcerative colitis or Crohn’s disease that meet the standards of safety and efficacy comparable to the experience with aminosalicylates in ulcerative colitis.
**Trough level directed therapy in IBD**

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Recent years a new concept has been developed in order to optimize treatment of chronic inflammatory diseases with anti-TNF monoclonal antibodies by treating patients based on actual exposure to the drug rather than according to a standard dosing regimen.

There is evidence from various studies that the rate of primary nonresponse and non-remission to anti-TNF in inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) ranges between 10% to 40% and 50% to 80%, respectively. The cause of this phenomenon is considered multifactorial with both pharmacokinetic and/or pharmacodynamic parameters playing a role. The often finding of undetectable or low serum drug concentrations has been attributed to an accelerated (non) immune clearance of the drug in the systemic circulation and/or local tissue. It could be postulated that the absence or loss of response to anti-TNF is associated with adequate serum drug concentrations. Moreover, a hypothesis of a probable shift of the disease from TNF-driven to a non-TNF-driven inflammatory pathway has been suggested. The development of anti-drug antibodies, which is known as immunogenicity, can also play an important role because it has been demonstrated that binding of these antibodies to the anti-TNF drug leads in a faster clearance of drug having as final result less favorable clinical outcomes.

Although a link between serum levels of infliximab or adalimumab, anti-drug antibodies and clinical outcomes in patients with IBD has been suggested by several studies, the interpretation of published data in the clinical practice has been challenging. There are many differences in the used assays for trough levels measurement (ELISA, HMSA, RIA) and their description (mean, median, quartile, cut-off) in relation to various outcomes (loss of response, remission) during the course of anti-TNF therapy.

With an aim to predict the anti-TNF serum levels and to optimize the dose based on serum level, the use of a pharmacokinetic model is considered of great importance. Furthermore, today the cost in IBD therapy is mainly driven by the anti-TNF treatment and a strategy to optimize-personalize therapy and avoid unnecessary treatment is desirable.
Is there a standard approach for post-surgical Crohn’s disease?

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A majority of patients with Crohn’s disease (CD) will require surgical intervention during the course of their disease. Surgical resection is not curative and disease recurrence is relatively common. The decision to pursue surgical treatment for CD is highly personalized. In addition, the pre-operative and perioperative therapies and also the use of prophylactic medical therapy following surgery vary substantially and are also individualized, but adhering to common medical strategies generally used for CD patients. With more medications available, our armamentarium for the postoperative situation has become more complex. In the past, medical maintenance therapy following surgical intervention has not been routinely recommended and patients were frequently treated on demand, with initiation of treatment at the time of symptomatic or endoscopic recurrence. Emerging evidence suggests that early postoperative initiation of medical therapy, especially in high-risk patients may reduce the need for additional operations.

Within the first year of surgery, 70–90% of CD patients develop endoscopic recurrence, increasing to 80–100% within three years. It would be extremely helpful, if the disease course of an inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) before and following surgery could be predicted in order to select the most beneficial diagnostic and therapeutic approaches. However, there are no perfect clinical predictors or markers for the future disease course following surgery in CD patients. Several studies suggest that mucosal cytokine profiles may be helpful to predict the recurrence of IBD. Elevated mucosal concentrations of TNFα, IL-1 and IL-6 in the ileocolonic mucosa have been described as independent predictors for future relapse of IBD. However, the measurement of mucosal cytokine levels is not used in standard clinical care.

Extent and severity of disease prior to surgical intervention and severity of early endoscopic lesions following surgery have been demonstrated to predict the symptomatic course of disease after surgery. Therefore, postoperative surveillance has been shown to be helpful to identify patients, who will benefit from early and intensive postoperative medical management. For example, early use of anti-TNFs after surgery has recently been demonstrated to significantly decrease the risk of endoscopic recurrence in patients with multiple previous surgeries, stricturing or penetrating disease. Quitting smoking reduces the post-operative recurrence rate significantly. Several studies have shown a more complicated disease course in patients with perforating disease than in those with non-perforating disease.

Especially in patients with complicated disease courses structured management of IBD patients within a coordinated multidisciplinary IBD team may improve the outcome with improved perioperative and postoperative results. Especially in the postoperative setting, patients should be referred back to their treating gastroenterologists to initiate early follow-up colonoscopy and/or initiation of postoperative medical therapy to avoid a gap between endoscopic recurrence and clinical symptoms.
Azathioprine and methotrexate: Getting dusty?

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For more than 2 decades thiopurines (6-mercaptopurine (6-MP) and azathioprine) as well as methotrexate have been established in the therapy of inflammatory bowel diseases (IBD). Before the introduction of biologics, thiopurines were the preferred approach in patients with steroid dependent IBD. [1] Methotrexate has never been used on a “larger scale” in IBD patients despite 2 successful clinical studies demonstrating its efficacy for induction and maintenance of remission in steroid dependent Crohn’s disease. [2] The low utilization of methotrexate is probably due to several reasons. The methotrexate studies were published in the same time period when infliximab was introduced in the therapeutic armamentarium for Crohn’s disease (CD). The introduction of infliximab went along with significant marketing efforts, whereas methotrexate as a generic drug was not advertised at all to patients or physicians. Also in CD methotrexate has to be applied subcutaneously, which is less favored by patients and also requires some monitoring of the therapy. With the discovery of anti-drug antibodies to biologics and their impact on the overall clinical efficacy, thiopurines and to a lesser degree methotrexate became again en vogue in the setting of combination therapy. [3] Also, due to the risk of hepatosplenic lymphoma as an extremely rare adverse event of thiopurine therapy methotrexate has become a first-line monotherapy or is preferable used in combination therapy in pediatric Crohn’s disease. [4]

Currently several clinical questions in relation to the therapy with either thiopurines or methotrexate are evaluated: The COMBINE trial (ClinicalTrials.gov Identifier: NCT02772965) will evaluate the question of the efficacy of the combination therapy of methotrexate with either adalimumab or infliximab. This study will hopefully clarify why in the COMMIT trial no additive clinical benefit for methotrexate/infliximab combination was observed, which is in contrast to the results of the SONIC study with a significant better clinical benefit of the combination of azathioprine and infliximab compared to single agent therapy. [5] Another important question is if a reduced dose of 6-MP/azathioprine or methotrexate is equally effective as a normal dose in preventing antibody formation and maintaining clinical efficacy of biological therapy. Methotrexate could also represent a unique and affordable maintenance therapy for UC patients in need for an immunosuppressive treatment. The recently published French METEOR trial investigated the clinical efficacy of subcutaneously applied methotrexate 25 mg once weekly as an induction regimen over 16 weeks. [6] The trial failed to achieve the primary endpoint of a combined clinical and endoscopic remission, but showed a significant advantage of methotrexate to placebo for the secondary endpoint of clinical remission only. Several factors might have contributed that the results of this investigator initiated trial are not as clear-cut as one would have hoped for. [4] Currently another investigator initiated study evaluates the clinical value of methotrexate in UC, the US MERIT-UC trial. [7] The primary endpoint of this prospective, randomized, placebo controlled study is the efficacy of methotrexate to maintain steroid free remission over 54 weeks. This trial is still recruiting and the results are expected in early 2018. Hopefully this study will clarify if methotrexate is a viable therapeutic options in patients who fail mesalamine therapy.
References:


New concepts for treatment – Lessons learned

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The treatment of both forms of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), i.e., Crohn’s disease (CD) and ulcerative colitis (UC), has continuously evolved since the clinical identification of these chronic inflammatory disorders of the gastrointestinal tract. The pace of this evolution has increased from the very slow one of the 1940’s and 50’s to the rapid one of the 2000’s. Evolution has increased not only its speed but also its numbers, as a constantly expanding number of agents fill up the current therapeutic armamentarium for IBD. However, it is intriguing to notice that some of the very first drugs used for IBD, like sulfasalazine and its derivatives as well as corticosteroids, are still being broadly used today, and here is the first very important lesson: something found to be therapeutically active by educated guess is still being used side-by-side with sophisticated drugs rationally developed based on knowledge of IBD pathophysiology and state-of-the-art technologies. From the 1980’s to the 90’s the spectrum of agents used for CD and UC substantially expanded to include immunosuppressive agents, antibiotics, probiotics and elemental diets. None of them provided a cure for IBD, but there it becomes obvious that there is always a subgroup of patients who do benefit from any one of those medications, alone or in combination. And here is a second important lesson: every patient or groups of patients respond differently to similar or dissimilar therapies, and there is no “single size fits all” treatment for IBD. Then the late 1990’s and the 2000’s brought us brand new approaches such as stem cells, fecal transplantation and oligonucleotides, and the biologics. The latter have revolutionized how we treat IBD and what we can expect from modern IBD therapy, not only from the doctor’s perspective but also from the perspective of the patients, who are increasingly knowledgeable about IBD treatment by accessing widely available information and take part in therapeutic decisions. Once a therapeutic decision is made, then the expectation arises of a beneficial effect, be it a clinical response or, better yet, a full clinical remission. Unfortunately, the way we define response and remission is still fairly simplistic and unsophisticated, relying primarily on clinical, endoscopic and histological parameters. There is plenty of evidence that all of these are only partially reliable readouts, but we continue to use them not only in daily clinical practice but also even in large multicenter clinical trials. This situation carries another lesson: we are reticent to start using more informative and dependable methods, such a mucosal gene expression profiles, to actually learn whether and to what degree molecular inflammatory patterns have been suppressed or modified. Without adopting more refined methodologies during clinical management we will mislead ourselves as well as the patients, and will postpone the use of additional or alternate therapies.

Major advances in technology go hand-in-hand with better knowledge of IBD, resulting in improved treatment options that can benefit the whole field of IBD. This is also a lesson, one that brings along a corollary question and an appended lesson: have we cured IBD? No and, if so, why not? What is still missing? And the lesson here is that we are still missing a lot of knowledge because of the extreme biological complexity of both forms of IBD. The number of reports on IBD pathogenesis and management
grows exponentially year-by-year, while progress in new treatments proceeds at a much slower pace. We currently know much about the variation of the genetic makeup of IBD patients, we are accepting the astonishing complexity of the environment outside (the diet and xenobiotics) and inside (the microbiota) our bodies to which we must adapt to remain healthy, and we have a reasonable grasp of the immune system and how to manipulate it. But, do we know how these elements come together and impact on each other to determine an outcome of health or IBD? The answer is no, and this answer brings still another lesson. We need to not only accept the amazing complexity of biological phenomena, but also make an effort to organize it to understand it more fully. So, if biological diversity and complexity are intrinsic to IBD, how can we expect to cure CD or UC by intervening on single or a few isolated pathogenic pathways? We can expect some positive results, but we cannot expect a real cure, defined as the disappearance of all disease with no subsequent recurrence. This is obviously a very high stake, but one that can be tackled by adopting new approaches aimed at making sense of biological complexity and diversity. Most IBD experts accept the notion of personalized therapy, but this is only being implemented at a narrow clinical level, and much more “personalization” is needed. And here goes another crucial lesson: only a highly integrated approach can solve the puzzle of IBD, an approach where all putative elements involved with IBD are taken into account, analyzed, integrated, and screened for key controlling factors. These will come down to a selected number of specific genes, proteins, signals, metabolites, etc. that, alone or in various combination, hold the key to the mechanism of disease in each patient. And the lesson here is that this can be done, and can be done today. This can be accomplished by adopting a number of available systems biology and bioinformatics tools that allow integrating massive amount of data and identify the controllers (nodes/hubs) of the disease network(s) that then become the target for therapeutic intervention. So, we have learned many lessons in the therapeutic journey of IBD, but we need to accept the answers to effectively change the way the “see” and treat IBD.
Session III

Infections and the GI tract
Impact of HIV on intestinal function

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HIV associated enteropathy has first been described in the 1990s. Functional abnormalities are clinically characterized by severe weight loss and diarrhea, most prominent in late HIV-infection with severe immunodeficiency. Infection with the human immunodeficiency virus has a profound impact on gastrointestinal immunity and consequently on intestinal function. This impact on GI-immunity was noted early, but not well and fully understood. Parallel studies in primary HIV-infection and in simian immunodeficiency virus infections demonstrated, that HIV-infection leads to a near complete destruction of gastrointestinal CD4-memory-cells very early in primary infection. This loss of CD4-memory cells leads to bacterial translocation and systemic inflammation also early in the disease. Overt functional changes develop later with morphologic changes in villi architecture, loss of epithelium surface and impaired regeneration.

While some of the clinical features can be reverted with antiretroviral therapy, micronutrient replacement or symbiotics, the repopulation of CD4-cells in the GI-tract is by far not as complete as in peripheral blood. Markers of systemic inflammation remain high in many patients. The immunological changes in these patients are similar to immunosenescence and thus may contribute to more rapid aging as part of HIV-pathogenesis.

HIV-associated enteropathy thus is still an important factor in HIV pathogenesis, even with modern antiretroviral therapy. In addition, it is an important model to study the effects of gastrointestinal immunity on systemic inflammation, intestinal function and aging.
CMV colitis – Infectious complication or bystander in IBD

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Cytomegalovirus (CMV) causes a latent infection in more than 70% of adult IBD patients which does not affect the natural course of disease. However, CMV can be reactivated during treatment with steroids and immunosuppressives (IMS, i.e. thiopurines, methotrexate, calcineurin inhibitors), or because of malnutrition, advanced age, recent surgery, etc. Reactivation can take the form of subclinical CMV infection (slight increase in viral DNA load or a few CMV inclusion bodies detected by H&E staining combined with immunohistochemistry [IHC] in colonic biopsy specimens) or CMV disease (damage to end-organ, e.g. colitis, hepatitis, etc.). The former is common in patients with active IBD, especially ulcerative colitis (UC), but is self-limited and does not need any treatment or withdrawal of steroids or IMS. In contrast, CMV colitis has been associated with a complicated course of UC although its association with flares of Crohn’s disease (CD) is less well documented. CMV colitis should be suspected in every UC patient who presents with severe and/or steroid-refractory colitis, and risk factors are severe endoscopic ulcers, intense histological inflammation, and advanced age. CMV colitis is diagnosed by the presence of florid inclusion bodies and > 250 CMV viral DNA copies/mg of tissue by real-time PCR in whole blood. It appears that the use of anti-TNF biologics is not associated with increased risk of CMV colitis. In contrast to CMV infection, the outcome of severe UC complicated by CMV colitis is worse, is associated with increased rates of colectomy and necessitates withdrawal of IMS and treatment with ganciclovir for 2–3 weeks. Risk factors for colectomy are the presence of intense intestinal inflammation, more than 5 infected cells per section counted, and low haemoglobin and albumin levels. Thus, CMV is usually an innocent bystander in active IBD and any screening is not needed before application of appropriate treatment with steroids and/or conventional IMS. However, in patients who are rendered steroid- and/or IMS-refractory CMV colitis should be sought and treated appropriately.

References:

Clostridium difficile and fecal transplantation

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Infectious diseases of the gut are frequently associated with diarrhea and abdominal pain. One example is Clostridium difficile infection (CDI). Bartlett et al. first identified Clostridium difficile as the major infectious cause of antibiotic-associated diarrhea in 1978 [1]. Clostridia are able to form spores which can survive under very restrictive conditions.

In the past years there has been a constant rise of CDI due to increased use of antibiotics, an older population and more virulent Clostridium difficile strains [2]. Treatment of choice is an antibiotic treatment with Metronidazole or Vancomycin orally with primary clinical cure rates of up to 90%. Unfortunately in about 15% the infection reoccurs and the chances of a successful second course of antibiotic treatment are lower [3].

An emerging therapeutic option for the treatment of CDI in recent years (albeit already described several decades ago in the literature) is fecal microbiota transplantation (FMT) and treatment guidelines have been published [4]. In FMT a fecal suspension from a healthy individual is infused into the gastrointestinal tract of another person in an attempt to treat an illness. This treatment has a low complication rate; adverse effects that are most often reported are those associated with a colonoscopy. Furthermore to date no transmissions of infectious bowel diseases has been reported. In a randomized study by van Nood et al. the infusion of donor feces was significantly more effective for the treatment of recurrent CDI than the use of vancomycin [5]. Due to the high efficacy of this treatment and the relatively low rate of adverse effects FMT has gained rising importance in the treatment of recurrent Clostridium difficile colitis.

New alternatives to donor dependent FMT are under investigation. Very recently a clinical trial using spores of non-pathogenic Clostridia species, however, has failed to show significant clinical efficacy (vs. placebo).

References:


Infections and GI cancer

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The role of infectious agents in carcinogenesis has commanded significant scientific interest culminating in at least 7 Nobel prizes thus far. Infections can cause cancer by a variety of mechanisms including direct transformation of cells, induction of immunosuppression with consequent reduced cancer immunosurveillance, or by causing chronic inflammation. The latter is now recognised as an essential component of many epithelial cancers by virtue of its combined effects of generating genotoxic by-products and increased cellular proliferation, thus maximising the potential for DNA damage. Perhaps the best paradigm for an infection-induced and chronic inflammation-driven malignancy is gastric cancer. Gastric cancer has a complex multifactorial aetiology but it is now fully established that the key pathophysiological events are largely initiated by H. pylori infection. In genetically predisposed hosts, this infection induces severe gastritis with a consequent hypochlorhydric and atrophic phenotype that facilitates genotoxic damage and neoplastic transformation. The infection leads to malignant transformation through the recognized effects of the mutagenic byproducts and mediators of the inflammatory process but also through the effects of the altered gastric microbiome that thrives in the absence of gastric acid. There is also strong evidence that some of the proteins produced by H. pylori are directly involved in the carcinogenic process. The most understood of these is the cytotoxin-associated gene A (CagA) protein, which acts as an oncogenic protein.

Over the past decade, it has become abundantly clear that the gut microbiota play a crucial role in human health and disease, including several GI cancers. Of these, colorectal and liver cancers are the most important and best understood. It appears that a dysbiotic gut microbiota is a pro-inflammatory risk factor that has a direct impact on the neoplastic process at these two sites. The mechanisms are being unravelled fast and the prospect of preventing such global killers through simple manipulation of the gut microbiota is realistic and palpable. Gastroenterology as a discipline within medicine has never been more exciting.
Session IV

Rheumatic diseases and the gut
The gut microbiota: It’s role in rheumatoid arthritis and other inflammatory diseases

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Immune-mediated diseases, including Crohn’s disease, ulcerative colitis, rheumatoid arthritis (RA), spondyloarthropathies (SpA), psoriasis and multiple scleroses share common characteristics, each being complex genetic disorders with strong environmental influences. These disorders have overlapping susceptibility genes, increased incidence of shared disease phenotypes, and recent evidence of overlapping abnormal microbiota profiles. IBD, RA and SpA each have evidence of dysbiosis, with a common decreased diversity of resident gut microbiota and some overlap in intestinal bacterial populations that are increased or decreased during inflamed states. In IBD, Clostridium subgroups and *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii* are decreased, with parallel expansion of Proteobacteria, especially functionally abnormal (adherent/invasive) *E. coli* strains. Far less consistency results exist for RA and SpA, but it appears that *Faecalibacterium* species are decreased. Human RA studies suggest strong abnormalities in gut and oral microbiota profiles, with the vast bulk of information available for bacteria and very little for fungi and viruses. As with IBD, uncertainties exist over primary vs. secondary roles for the observed dysbiosis in RA and SpA. Evidence that HLA haplotypes affect intestinal bacterial profiles and that fecal transplants from experimental arthritis transfer phenotypes to susceptible mice suggest a causative role, but there is no evidence that altering the microbiome with probiotics or antibiotics affects human RA. A possible secondary effect is suggested by dysbiotic profiles being associated with disease activity, improving with treatment of active inflammation. Animal models are very helpful in evaluating possible pathogenic mechanisms, which include bacterial regulation of immune function, such as TH17/Treg ratios and mucosal permeability, which affects uptake and systemic distribution of intestinal bacterial TLR ligands and antigens. Some intestinal bacterial antigens can activate autoimmune responses through molecular mimicry with mammalian antigens. This rapidly expanding microbial information has the possibility of guiding development of novel therapies that normalize the associated dysbiosis, as well as biomarkers that can predict clinically important disease subsets, aggressiveness of disease and therapeutic outcomes.
Ankylosing spondylitis and the gut: What is the connection?

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Peripheral and axial spondyloarthritis (SpA) are common extraintestinal manifestations of inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) occurring in up to 10% of patients with Crohn’s disease (CD) and ulcerative colitis (UC). Moreover, asymptomatic intestinal inflammation, usually involving the terminal ileum, has been demonstrated in a significant number of patients with ankylosing spondylitis (AS) and other SpAs. Two types of inflammation have been observed in patients with AS: (1) acute inflammation as seen in infectious colitis and (2) chronic inflammation resembling CD. Long-term evolution to overt CD has been described in 7% of patients with initial chronic gut inflammation. The two diseases (AS and CD) show an overlapping set of predisposing genes: The chronic, but not the acute subtype of gut inflammation in AS was shown to be associated with a CARD15 SNP also strongly linked to CD. In AS, in addition to HLA-B27, genes implicated in the Th17 and IL23 pathway and the aminopeptidases ERAP1 and ERAP1 are most strongly linked to the disease.

Several immunologic similarities between gut inflammation in SpA and CD have been described, such as increased expression of the E-cadherin-catenin complex, up-regulation of integrin on intraepithelial T cells, and increased numbers of macrophages expressing the scavenger receptor CD163, supporting the concept that this subgroup of SpA patients may be considered a model for early immune alterations related to CD. T lymphocytes, which were found to be clonally expanded in the gut as well as in the synovium of SpA-patients, play an important role in the regulation of gut innate and specific immune responses.

Finally, microbial dysbiosis in the gut is emerging as a common component in various inflammatory disorders including IBD and SpA. Decreased numbers of Firmicutes, a major phyla of gut commensals, especially the species Faecalibacterium prausnitzii and Clostridium leptum have been found in various inflammatory disorders including SpA and IBD. Recent findings are consistent with the hypothesis that genes associated with AS act at least in part through effects on the gut microbiome.

Several of the novel cytokine directed biologic therapies target IBD as well as the SpAs, whereas others are efficient in SpAs only and may lead to flares in IBD patients.
Whipple’s disease mimicking seronegative rheumatic diseases

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Whipple's disease (WD) is a chronic infectious systemic disease caused by the bacterium Tropheryma whippelii (TW) that is widely spread in our environment. Children may present an acute primary infection, but only a small number of people with a genetic predisposition subsequently develop clinically overt WD. Classic WD affects middle-aged men and is characterized by gastrointestinal and general symptoms including marked diarrhoea (with serious malabsorption), abdominal pain, prominent weight loss, and low-grade fever [1]. However, WD might also manifest as chronic infection without typical GI symptoms. WD can be the cause of chronic inflammatory joint or spine disease frequently misdiagnosed as seronegative rheumatoid arthritis or HLA-B27 negative spondyloarthritis as well as undifferentiated connective tissue disease or vasculitis. The diagnosis is based on the clinical picture and typical histology revealing foamy macrophages containing periodic-acid-Schiff-(PAS-)positive material, or positive findings of TW-DNA in tissue samples, synovial fluid, cerebrospinal fluid or other specimens by PCR analysis. Long-term (up to one year) antibiotic treatment is required resulting in rapid improvement and clinical remission in the majority of WD patients. However, primary or secondary treatment failure as well as an immune reconstitution syndrome might occur [2].

Analyzing a cohort of 20 WD patients of our tertiary Rheumatology Center at the Asklepios Clinic Bad Abbach, several important lessons could be learned:

i) GI symptoms are absent in a substantial number of patients and musculoskeletal symptoms may be predominant, ii) exclusion of WD once during the course of the disease is not sufficient, iii) immunosuppressive therapy may “unmask” the presence of TW, iv) biopsies of the lower GI tract may be required to establish the diagnosis, v) PCR analysis should be performed if histologic findings are inconclusive [3].

References:

Factors relevant to energy regulation in the body influence every physiological and pathophysiological pathway. The tinniest event in cell physiology needs energy-rich fuels, typically in form of glucose, fatty acids, or amino acids yielding ATP. E.g., folding of stretched amino acid chains in the endoplasmic reticulum to native proteins needs 6 ATP molecules [1]. A person living a sedentary way of life with 1.80 m and 85 kg needs 10,000 kJ (2388 kcal) per day, which is facilitated by hydrolyzation of 200 moles of ATP. A Tour de France bicyclist might need 30,000 kJ (7165 kcal) a day, and a person with sepsis might spend up to 20,000 kJ (4776 kcal) during 24 hours.

Energy regulation in the body and in every cell is a critical physiological determinant of life, and energy availability always represented the strongest evolutionary pressure [2]. Two organs (or organ systems) the brain and the immune system – dominate energy regulation in the body. During evolution, both organs developed a sophisticated memory to save energy. The two organs are selfish in that activation of one of these systems blocks energy distribution to the other and to the rest of the body. Central to dominance is insulin resistance, an adaptive evolutionarily positively selected catabolic program of the brain and the immune system. The brain uses hormones of the pituitary gland and the sympathetic nervous system to redirect energy to the brain and activated muscles, but this blocks the immune system. The immune system has its own pathways using proinflammatory cytokines to block the brain and voluntary muscular activities.

If a patient develops a chronic inflammatory disease (CID), the immune system becomes activated and it dominates energy regulation in the body. Unfortunately, the brain is under its continuous influence leading to sickness behaviour with all consequences such as fatigue and even major depression, loss of appetite with anorexia and malnutrition, reduced libido, withdrawal of social contacts and loneliness, and others. In flare-ups of the disease but also during drug-controlled intervals of relatively low inflammation, the activated immune system influences energy redistribution. Typically, this can be observed as an increase in the resting metabolic rate (RMR) and a parallel decrease in physical activity-induced energy expenditure (PAEE). I call the extra costs of the activated immune system “undesirable”, because a patient would rather spend his free energy for desirable activities. In conjunction with an activated energy-demanding immune system, psychological stress (the stress of chronic illness), anxiety (the stress of living a shorter and harder life), disease-induced loneliness, chronic pain, chronic sleeping problems, sometimes higher involuntary muscle activity (e.g., in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease), and often regular smoking induce extra energy expenditure. These extra bystander costs further reduce physical activity and desirable actions.

Physicians treat patients with CIDs by inhibiting inflammation and immune system activity. However, this is only one part of the problem because the extra costs outside the immune system are usually not respected. An integrative approach, using a multitude of techniques from different disciplines, needs to define the immune system and
non-immune system extra costs of patients with CIDs. With an integrative understanding and therapy, life quality of patients with CIDs will increase because they can spend extra energy for desirable activities. This lecture delineates an integrative approach to detect extra energy expenditure by physicochemical and other methods.

References:

Session V

Endocrinology and inflammation
Is diabetes an inflammatory disease and should it be treated like that?

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It is a well-known clinical observation that inflammatory diseases are accompanied by metabolic implications such as hyperglycemia, insulin resistance and increased fatty acids. On the other hand, metabolic diseases have inflammatory implications. There is a chronic and low-grade state of inflammation in obesity and type 2 diabetes. Physiological insulin resistance during infection or inflammation re-distributes glucose and fatty acids to immune cells.

What is the evidence from clinical studies using anti-inflammatory approaches to treat patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus?

Basically, TNF plays an important role in insulin resistance in rodents. Blocking TNF in rodents reverses obesity-related diabetes. There are no state of the art clinical studies showing convincing evidence of an anti-diabetic potential due to underpowered cohorts and short duration of the studies. Only one single study over 6 months showed a 10% improvement of fasting glucose levels in 40 prediabetic obese patients.

Diacerein belongs to the chemical group of anthranoids. Although the mechanism of action is unknown, diacerein decreases the levels of TNF and of IL1β and has therefore been used in rheumatic diseases. Diacerein has potent effects on insulin secretion and glycemic control with a reduction of HBA1c level by 1.6%.

IL-1 receptor antagonists such as anakinra (a recombinant human IL-1 receptor antagonist) have also been studied in diabetes. Anakinra was able to improve glycemia, inflammation and insulin secretion. Two additional studies in patients with impaired glucose tolerance or prediabetes demonstrated positive effects of anakinra on beta cell secretory capacity. Since anakinra requires daily injections and often causes adverse effects at the injection site, humanized antibodies against IL1β have been developed. Each of these antibodies had beneficial effects in patients with type 2 diabetes. However, studies were either underpowered or showed only little improvements of glycosylated HBA1c levels, probably due to low pre-study levels.

Inhibition of the IKK/NFkB pathway might also be of benefit in insulin resistance. Salsalate improves insulin sensitivity, insulin secretion and glycemic control to a moderate extent of 0.4–0.5%. Salsalate also has effects in prediabetic patients and in drug-naive type 2 diabetic patients.

There is upcoming evidence of potential beneficial effects of CCR2 antagonism in diabetes.

Obesity causes an increased flux of fatty acids into muscle and liver with an accumulation of DAG in these organs. DAG activates specific isoforms of protein kinases, that are PKC T in muscle and PKC E in the liver. These isoforms cause an inhibitory phos
phorylation of IRS-1 and the insulin receptor itself leading to insulin resistance. Weight reduction by diet, physical activity and bariatric surgery remove ectopic fat and are able reverse diabetes. Most interestingly, PKC-isoform specific inhibitors such as FGF-21 might represent new drug targets.

Finally, targeting ectopic fat is more close to the pathophysiology of diabetes than anti-inflammatory therapy.
Does fat cause inflammation? Metabolic syndrome and NASH

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Nowadays non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) is becoming the most common chronic liver disease both in adults and children, and is the second indication to liver transplantation in USA. Its prevalence involves 25–30% of the general population. The highest prevalence rates are registered in the Middle East and South America, the lowest in Africa. In Europe and North America approximately one every four adults in the general population has NAFLD. NAFLD prevalence varies from 16% in lean individuals to 76% in obese; it is higher in men, in patients with type 2 diabetes mellitus, metabolic syndrome or hyperlipidemia, and in Hispanic subjects. Natural history of NAFLD has different clinical entities: simple steatosis, Nonalcoholic steatohepatitis (NASH), fibrosis, cirrhosis, and HCC. HCC could develop in NASH patients also without the presence of cirrhosis in more than 43% of the cases. Due to the coexistence of visceral obesity, insulin resistance and dyslipidemia, NAFLD is considered to be the hepatic manifestation of the metabolic syndrome. Steatosis is a reversible condition, whose major determinants are lifestyle habits: diet and physical exercise. NAFLD progresses to NASH in 30% of the cases. We don’t yet know when NASH becomes irreversible in the progression towards fibrosis and cirrhosis. The responsible of the passage between NAFLD and NASH could probably involve the so-called organokines, such as adipokines, myokines and hepatokines, all proteins with both paracrine or/and endocrine activities.
Mediators derived from fat tissue and their impact on systemic disease: Treatment targets in the future?

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For a long time fat tissue has been considered to serve exclusively as energy storage. Several discoveries led to a fresh view on this compartment. First, mediators released by the fat tissue were identified to contribute to tissue homeostasis and furthermore participate in the regulation of the immune system. For example our group could identify leptin as a critical regulator for intestinal inflammation. Similar data were described in parallel for other inflammatory conditions as well as for different fat tissue-derived mediators. Second, the fat tissue architecture revealed milieu-specific structural and cellular changes that we only start to understand. Here, draining lymph nodes from an area of chronic inflammation have been characterized by an increase in the number of surrounding adipocytes that in parallel decreased in size. This hyperplasia of adipocytes can equally be observed in the creeping fat of Crohn’s disease. Remarkably here is the unique cellular composition that is not only dominated by regulatory macrophages but also presents with memory T cells underlining the working model of a second barrier. This unique compartment is being shaped by translocating bacteria which suffice to stimulate cells within the stromal compartment as well as adipocytes. Last, fatty acids within the inflammatory or tumor environment have been shown to modulate the immune response. Here, oleic acid is of particular interest, since it can mediate a strong inhibitory effect on T cell proliferation mediated by cells of the myeloid compartment. In summary, the fat tissue has turned from a sole energy provider into a complex tissue that interacts in many networks with inflammatory as well as tumorigenic diseases. Hence it seems feasible that the more detailed understanding of this network might ultimately result in novel therapeutic strategies.
Mesenteric lymphatic changes in Crohn’s disease

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Early pathological descriptions of Crohn’s disease argued for a potential defect in lymph transport; however, this concept has not been thoroughly investigated. In mice, poor healing in response to infection-induced tissue damage can cause hyperpermeable lymphatic collecting vessels in mesenteric adipose tissue that impairs antigen and immune cell access to mesenteric LNs, which normally sustain appropriate immunity. To investigate whether analogous changes might occur in human intestinal disease, we established a 3-dimensional imaging approach to characterize the lymphatic vasculature in mesenteric tissue from controls or patients with Crohn’s disease (CD). In CD specimens, B cell-rich aggregates resembling tertiary lymphoid organs (TLOs) impinged upon lymphatic collecting vessels that enter and exit LNs. In areas of creeping fat, we observed B cells and apparent innate lymphoid cells that had invaded the lymphatic vessel wall, suggesting these cells may be mediators of lymphatic remodeling. Although TLOs have been described in many chronic inflammatory states, their anatomic relationship to pre-established LNs, has never been revealed. Our data indicate that, at least in the Crohn’s disease-affected mesentery, TLOs are positioned along collecting lymphatic vessels in a manner expected to impact delivery of lymph to LNs. It is furthermore possible that the structural alterations to human collecting lymphatic vessels render them obstructed or permeable in a manner similar to the outcomes described in mice infected by Y. pseudotuberculosis or dogs that have been treated to have elevated output pressures in LNs. We speculate that this, in turn, may promote leakage of chylomicrons that could drive the genesis of creeping fat in CD.
Session VI

Inflammation, drugs and cancer
Inflammation and colon cancer – Harnessing the immune system in diagnosis and treatment

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Colorectal cancer (CRC) remains deadly due to metastatic disease and there is a fundamental gap in understanding how CRC metastases form. The inflammatory cytokine transforming growth factor-beta (TGFβ) promotes metastatic CRC at later stages and TGFβ inhibitors are in early phase clinical trials, but focusing on TGFβ alone may not be effective without considering the role of its superfamily member, Activin, which also has prometastatic actions mechanistically distinct from TGFβ. Preliminary studies indicate that Activin and TGFβ are complexly intertwined and need to be interpreted as a unit and further that tumor stroma potentiates metastatic Activin/TGFβ signaling. Ultimately, given their importance in metastatic disease, both Activin and TGFβ pathways are attractive putative targets. Despite several studies investigating TGFβ blockade in the setting of solid tumors including CRC, to date no benefit has been shown. This might be due to the complex interplay of TGFβ with other pathways, such as Activin, and the multifunctional character, where inhibition could theoretically not only lead to beneficial anti-metastatic effects, but simultaneously have detrimental effects of loss of growth suppression at least in a subset of patients. Recently, we reported that in an APC driven murine model of CRC global inhibition of TGFβ signaling leads to an autoimmune response, wasting and shorter survival. Therefore, caution is warranted with regards to TGFβ inhibition in unselected CRC patient cohorts. Biomarkers identifying patients with disrupted TGFβ signaling and a better understanding of pathway interconnectedness are needed before we can fully envision treatment strategies. We have additional evidence that the role of Activin in metastatic disease is underappreciated. Activin signaling appears to be an equal participant in TGFβ superfamily pathway signaling with no lesser effects than TGFβ. While TGFβ-directed therapeutics are clearly not appropriate for all CRC patients, there are sub-populations which would benefit from this approach. To implement this approach, biomarkers to stratify patients are needed and we propose that p21 localization could be such a biomarker. We support a novel view of Activin as a co-conspirator with TGFβ in a closely interconnected system, with net Activin and TGFβ signaling promoting metastasis. The mechanistic understanding of the Activin/TGFβ cross-regulation together with the translational component is highly significant and it shows great promise to improve clinical care for CRC patients in the near future.
5-ASA and immunosuppressants and colon cancer: Is there a role in colorectal cancer prevention?

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Colorectal cancer is the second most common GI cancer worldwide. More than 1.2 million patients are diagnosed with colorectal cancer every year, and more than 600,000 die from the disease. The prognosis varies according to the stage at diagnosis. Thus the 5-year relative survival of patients diagnosed with colorectal cancer is about 90% for patients with localized stage, 65% for patients with regional spread, and 10% for patients with distant tumour spread. Most cancers arise from adenomatous polyps. This process is associated with well characterised genetic changes the so-called adenoma-carcinoma sequence.

One of the factors with evidence for a role in tumour formation is prostaglandin E2. It is well known that aspirin influences the prostaglandin metabolism. Epidemiological studies strongly suggest a protective role of aspirin on colorectal cancer incidence and mortality. This is supported by secondary analyses of cardiovascular prevention trials. Thus in a pooled analysis aspirin use was associated with a reduction of CRC incidence by 25% and CRC mortality of 39%. The effect was even higher if only users >5 years were included. Furthermore several randomised studies using colorectal adenoma recurrence as a surrogate have been performed. In a meta-analysis the adenoma-recurrence rate in the aspirin arms was 17% lower than in the placebo-arms, restricting the analysis to advanced adenomas the effect was larger with 28%. However the use of aspirin is not without risks with GI- and intracranial bleeding being the most serious side effects. In a recent model calculation the use of aspirin was associated with a positive benefit-risk ratio for men and women aged 50 to 59 years whereas the risks were higher than the potential benefits for older age groups. However more data is needed before the use of aspirin should be considered for primary prevention of colorectal cancer. Furthermore it is unlikely that the effect would be large enough to influence recommended screening intervals.

COX-2 inhibitors have also been shown to reduce the adenoma recurrence rate. However due to the cardiovascular risks these substances should not be used for prevention. Other substances with immunmodulatory effects like vitamin D or statins have not been shown to be effective in CRC prevention.

Patients with inflammatory bowel disease have an increased CRC-risk. One of the risk factors in these patients is uncontrolled inflammation. Recent analyses have shown that the cancer risk has decreased in recent years. This is at least partly explained by better control of inflammation in IBD patients. There is some data on the protective effect of 5-ASA on cancer development. There is less data on the potential role of thiopurines and TNF-α antagonists.
Biologic therapy and paradoxical inflammation

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In attempting to understand the pathobiology of mucosal inflammation to smartly define targets for biologic therapy, results from both animal models and assessing the level of a particular protein/cytokine in the mucosa has been the historical approach. More recently, using this approach, there have been paradoxical responses in Biologic trials in Crohn’s disease. A major example of this has been the attempt to block the IL-17 pathway. The blockage of the IL-17 pathway has been very effective in psoriasis, however, trials in Crohn’s disease showed there was a subset of patients who flared. One such study showed preliminary evidence that demonstrated different genetic variants of the TNSF15 gene related to differential expression of TL1A showed response or flaring related to TNSF15 variants. Mouse models testing the level of TL1A levels on the outcome of IL-17 blockade, supported the findings in human studies. A second study using a mouse models with or without an engineered defect in epithelial barrier also showed different outcomes of IL-17 blockade. Finally, even if a dominant pathway such as been suggested with TL1A/DR3 is selected for biologic targeting, targeting the ligand or the receptor may not be equivalent. In fact, studies in mouse show differential outcomes on inflammation if TL1A (inhibition) or DR3 (no effect/increase) are targeted. These findings emphasize it is time for precision medicine approaches in developing biologics to treat inflammatory bowel diseases.
Session VII

New treatment options
In the Eastern world, bile from diverse animal species was long considered to have therapeutic value, whereas in the Western world, therapeutic agents were derived from plants. The National Cooperative Gallstone Study (US), a placebo-based, double-masked trial, confirmed the original Mayo report that chenodeoxycholic acid (CDCA) ingestion induces the slow dissolution of cholesterol gallstones. Ursodeoxycholic acid (UDCA), a Japanese development, was soon shown to also induce gallstone dissolution, and UDCA rapidly replaced CDCA because of its lack of toxicity. Despite the established safety and efficacy of UDCA for gallstone dissolution, gallstones are largely managed by laparoscopic cholecystectomy at present because such surgery provides a rapid and permanent cure for all types of gallstones. UDCA can be used to prevent gallstone formation in patients undergoing rapid weight loss after bariatric surgery.

UDCA was shown to improve biochemical parameters in primary biliary cirrhosis/cholangitis (PBC), and pooling of French, Canadian, and American data showed that UDCA increased survival. Obeticholic acid (OCA), the 6α-ethyl derivative of CDCA, was envisioned by R. Pellicciari in Italy, as a potent FXR agonist. OCA was shown to improve biochemical parameters in PBC patients unresponsive to UDCA, and OCA is now marketed for this purpose. OCA diminishes fibrosis in NASH, and large studies in which efficacy will be assessed by changes in liver biopsy histology are in progress. Primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC) does not respond to UDCA, but improvement in biochemical parameters has been achieved with 24-norUDCA, a homologue of UDCA. NorUDCA differs from natural bile acids in that it is secreted into bile in part in unconjugated form, undergoes cholehepatic shunting, and induces a bicarbonate-rich hypercholeresis. Bile acid synthesis from cholesterol involves a multi-enzyme pathway. The extremely rare inborn errors of bile acid biosynthesis and conjugation are now identified by mass spectrometry and treated successfully by ingestion of primary bile acids. Cholic acid is now approved by the FDA as a therapeutic agent.

DCA and CDCA induce colonic secretion and stimulate colonic motility. In the ileal enterocyte, bile acids induce the synthesis of a protein, FGF19, that travels to the liver and suppresses hepatocyte bile acid synthesis. Thus, ileal dysfunction or resection leads to less FGF19 release and an increase in bile acid biosynthesis; this in turn results in an increased flux of bile acids into the colon, inducing a secretory diarrhea. A subset of IBS-diarrhea patients has impaired FGF19 release leading to a failure of down regulation of bile acid synthesis and diarrhea (work of Julian Walters at the Hammersmith Hospital), thus providing an explanation for idiopathic bile acid malabsorption. FGF19 synthesis is FXR dependent, and OCA improves diarrhea in these patients as do bile acid sequestrants. In short bowel syndrome, bile acid malabsorption is profound, and the compensatory increase in bile acid synthesis is insufficient to restore luminal bile acid concentrations. Improved lipid absorption and weight gain can be obtained by feeding cholylsarcosine, a conjugated bile acid derivative that is non-secretory and resistant to bacterial deconjugation-dehydroxylation. Claims of Austrian
physicians a century ago that bile acids are effective treatment for postoperative ileus have been ignored.

Thus, in the past half century, bile acids and bile acid derivatives have been shown to be safe and effective in the treatment of certain biliary, hepatic, and intestinal diseases. It has been an exciting time for students of bile acid metabolism. And patients with biliary, hepatic, and intestinal disease have benefited.
New aspects of primary biliary cholangitis, primary sclerosing cholangitis and autoimmune hepatitis

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Primary biliary cholangitis (PBC) is a chronic non-suppurative destructive cholangitis with an underlying autoimmune pathogenesis. The chronic inflammatory process targets the small intrahepatic bile ducts. Autoantibodies against acyltransferases of the inner mitochondrial membrane (PDH-E2, BCKD-E2 and OGDC-E2) are the diagnostic hallmark. Ursodesoxycholic acid (UDCA), 13–15 mg/kg bodyweight, is the standard of care (SOC). Response to UDCA means normalization of alkaline phosphatase (AP) or reduction of AP to below twice the upper limit of normal. Responders to UDCA therapy have a long term survival comparable to the normal population: Patients who do not respond to UDCA, so called non-responders, progress and may become candidates for liver transplantation. 20–30 years ago PBC has been a major indication for liver transplantation. However, nowadays it is a rare indication. PBC may recur after liver transplantation and may lead to graft loss. Several new alternative therapies are now under clinical development for PBC, in particular for UDCA non-responders. Among interesting novel drugs are FXR receptor agonists like obeticholic acid (OCA). Significant improvements of AP have been demonstrated for OCA, in particular for UDCA non-responders. Therefore this therapy will soon be approved based on recently published phase 3 data. The therapy is rather safe apart from increase in pruritus in some patients. PBC is not only a liver disease. In up to 25% PBC is associated with extrahepatic autoimmune syndromes like the sicca syndrome as well as gluten-sensitive enteropathy (celiac disease). Recent research efforts also concentrate on the pathogenesis of extrahepatic manifestations of PBC like pruritus and fatigue. These efforts hopefully will lead to innovative therapies.

Primary sclerosing cholangitis (PSC) is a disease of unknown etiology and pathogenesis, the biggest “black box” of modern hepatology. Up to 15% develop bile duct cancer. In addition, the risk to develop pancreatic and colonic cancer is also significantly increased. There is no established medical therapy yet. The use of UDCA is controversial in PSC. UDCA is widely used at a concentration of 15–20 mg/kg bodyweight. Biochemical parameters like alkaline phosphatase improve under UDCA therapy while termination of UDCA leads to an increase in AP levels. High concentrations of UDCA may be harmful. However, AP is still controversial as an endpoint for PSC treatment. Another bile acid analogue, nor-ursodesoxycholic acid (Nor-UDCA), is under clinical development. Promising phase 2 results have been reported recently and phase 3 studies for the use of nor-UDCA in PSC are planned. This drug is under clinical development in PBC and NASH as well. Several competing hypotheses for the pathogenesis of PSC are being discussed. These include aberrant homing of gut primed T lymphocytes to the liver, namely bile ducts, autoimmunity, genetic predisposition, the toxic bile acid hypothesis, and the “leaky gut hypothesis” — just to name a few. Based on these hypotheses several novel therapeutic targets are under clinical development for PSC like FXR receptor agonists, bile acid analogues like nor-UDCA, monoclonal antibodies like anti LOX 2, e.g. simtuzumab, as an anti-fibrotic agent.
Finally, anti-integrin antibodies like vedolizumab, are under investigation. Apart from these novel medical therapies endoscopic treatment of dominant strictures, treatment of bacterial cholangitis and liver transplantation for end stage liver disease are well established.

Autoimmune hepatitis (AIH) has been the first liver disease in which medical therapy was shown to prolong survival. The standard of care is prednisolone alone or in combination with azathioprine. In patients with cirrhosis prednisolone may be replaced by budesonide, a topical steroid. Efficacy of budesonide was shown to be comparable to prednisolone while steroid specific side effects are significantly reduced due to the low systemic availability of this topic drug. The endpoints of treatment are normalization of transaminases, ALT and AST, and serum IgG levels. In non-responder patients to steroids with or without azathioprine alternative therapies have to be explored. Mycophenolate mofetil (MMF), tacrolimus and ciclosporine A are widely used as second line therapies. MMF is favored as a second line treatment in the case of azathioprine intolerance. The minority of patients does not respond to first or second line treatment. In those patients failing to first and second line treatments biologicals like monoclonal anti-TNF antibodies (Infliximab) or anti-B-cell antibodies like anti-CD20 (Rituximab) are explored as third line therapy regimen. Hopefully our insights into the pathogenesis of autoimmune hepatitis will be further develop in order to identify new therapeutic targets that allow a more specific and better tolerated therapeutic intervention. So far still 4% of all liver transplantations in Europe and North America are due to autoimmune hepatitis.
Can we treat or reverse fibrosis?

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Liver fibrosis, the accumulation of extracellular matrix proteins, occurs in most types of chronic liver disease. Patients with liver fibrosis may progress to cirrhosis with subsequent portal hypertension, hepatic failure and hepatocellular carcinoma. Activated hepatic stellate are the main extracellular matrix producing cell types in the liver. Following their activation activated hepatic stellate cells proliferate, acquire contractile functions and attract other immune cells to the liver [1]. Removing known stimuli of liver injury reduces liver fibrosis and can even lead to regression of cirrhosis in humans [2]. Beyond the cure of the primary liver disease, multiple targets for therapy have been established in preclinical models. These include targeting the activation process of hepatic stellate cells, inhibit fibrogenesis and promote the resolution of liver fibrosis [3, 4]. Although many approaches are effective in experimental models of liver fibrosis, the efficacy of many of these drugs has not been tested in humans. The recently published FLINT trial shows an improvement of hepatic fibrosis in patients with NASH treated with obeticholic acid for 72 weeks [5]. In addition, other currently ongoing clinical trials with promising antifibrotic effects will be discussed.

References:

New compounds for IBD treatment

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New classes of compounds used to treat inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) include anti-integrin therapy, anti-interleukin 12/23 therapy, Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitor therapy, S1P1 modulators, and anti-sense to SMAD7. The monoclonal antibody to α4β7 integrin, vedolizumab, is effective for induction and maintenance of remission in both ulcerative colitis and Crohn’s disease, and is currently approved throughout the world for though indications. Other still investigational drugs in this class include anti-MAdCAM1 (PF-00547,659, Pfizer), etrolizumab (anti-β7, rhumab beta 7, Genentech), and anti-α4β7 (AMG181, Amgen). The monoclonal antibody to the p40 subunit shared by both interleukin-12 and -23, ustekinumab, is effective for induction and maintenance of remission in Crohn’s disease, and is currently awaiting regulatory approval throughout the world for this indication. The monoclonal antibodies to the p19 subunit unique to interleukin-23, MEDI 2070 and risankizumab, have shown efficacy for induction therapy in Crohn’s disease in Phase 2 trials. The pan JAK inhibitor JAK1, JAK2 (to a lesser degree) and JAK3, tofacitinib, has shown efficacy for induction and maintenance of remission for ulcerative colitis in Phase 3 trials, and regulatory filings for this indication are anticipated. The S1P1 modulator, ozanimod, has shown efficacy for induction and maintenance therapy in Phase 2 trials in ulcerative colitis. The anti-sense to SMAD7, Mongersen, has shown efficacy in a Phase 2 trial in Crohn’s disease. The role of these new agents as first, second or third line agents in moderate to severe IBD is still evolving.
New anti-inflammatory targets in rheumatology

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Owing to the rapidly increasing knowledge in molecular biology and molecular pathophysiology, several novel therapeutic targets have been identified in the various inflammatory rheumatic diseases, of which a substantial number have already been licensed for clinical use or are close to market. In the “flagship” disease rheumatoid arthritis, the strongest dynamic is in the field of biosimilars, which, due to their lower price, challenge all established biologics, especially infliximab, etanercept, and adalimumab. In addition, several small molecules of the Janus-kinase inhibitor class, especially tofacitinib, which is already in clinical use outside of Europe and Switzerland, and baricitinib are expected to be licensed in 2017. Aside tocilizumab as interleukin-6 antagonist, several other IL-6 inhibitors have successfully completed phase III trials on their way to market. A novel idea is the inhibition of synovial macrophages by growth factor inhibitors, and specifically mavrilimumab may be available in the upcoming 2 years. Even more progressive is the situation in psoriatic arthritis, in which targeting IL-12/1-23 (ustekinumab), interleukin-17 (secukinumab) and the PDE4-inhibitor apremilast are within their first period of everyday clinical use. Of note, the close relationship between psoriatic arthritis and inflammatory spondyloarthopathies (e.g. ankylosing spondylitis), has led to the parallel use and partly licensing of these novel molecules also to inhibit inflammation at the vertebral column. More difficult is the situation in the field of connective tissue diseases and vasculitides. Inhibition of B-cell activating factors by belimumab appears only useful for few, single patients and aside rituximab for ANCA-associated vasculitides, few ideas are about to make it to clinical reality. On the other side, several kinase inhibitors are being tested for systemic sclerosis, at present the most challenging disease in the field of rheumatology. Taken together, there are many new ideas emerging resulting in a most interesting and fascinating period in clinical research in rheumatology.
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Abstracts