

Primary cellular immunodeficiencies

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Genetic defects in T-cell function lead to susceptibility to infections or to other clinical problems that are more grave than those seen in disorders resulting in antibody deficiency alone. Those affected usually present during infancy with either common or opportunistic infections and rarely survive beyond infancy or childhood. The spectrum of T-cell defects ranges from the syndrome of severe combined immunodeficiency, in which T-cell function is absent, to combined immunodeficiency disorders in which there is some, but not adequate, T-cell function for a normal life span. Recent discoveries of the molecular causes of many of these defects have led to a new understanding of the flawed biology underlying the ever-growing number of defects. Most of these conditions could be diagnosed by means of screening for lymphopenia or for T-cell deficiency in cord blood at birth. Early recognition of those so afflicted is essential to the application of the most appropriate treatments for these conditions at a very early age. The latter treatments include both transplantation and gene therapy in addition to immunoglobulin replacement. Fully defining the molecular defects of such patients is also essential for genetic counseling of family members and prenatal diagnosis. (*J Allergy Clin Immunol* 2002;109:747-57.)

Key words: *Severe combined immunodeficiency, T-cell activation defects, combined immunodeficiency, bone marrow transplantation, gene therapy*

In the 5 decades since the first human host defects were identified,^{1,2} more than 100 primary immunodeficiency syndromes have been described.³ These disorders involve one or more components of the immune system, including T, B, and natural killer (NK) lymphocytes; phagocytic cells; and complement proteins. This review will cover some, but by no means all, of the primary immunodeficiency diseases affecting T cells, including combined T- and B-cell defects (Table I and Fig 1). Defects in T-cell function lead to susceptibility to infections or to other clinical problems that are more severe than those associated with antibody deficiency disorders. Those affected rarely survive beyond infancy or childhood.

Abbreviations used

ADA:	Adenosine deaminase
CID:	Combined immunodeficiency
γ c:	Common cytokine receptor γ chain
GVHD:	Graft-versus-host disease
Jak3:	Janus kinase 3
NK:	Natural killer
PNP:	Purine nucleoside phosphorylase
RAG:	Recombinase-activating gene
SCID:	Severe combined immunodeficiency
SCID-X1:	X-linked SCID
TAP:	Transporter of antigenic peptides
WAS:	Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome
WASP:	Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome protein
ZAP-70:	Zeta chain-associated protein 70

THYMIC HYPOPLASIA (DIGEOGE SYNDROME)

Thymic hypoplasia results from dysmorphogenesis of the third and fourth pharyngeal pouches during early embryogenesis, leading to hypoplasia or aplasia of the thymus and parathyroid glands.^{4,5} Other structures forming at the same age are also frequently affected, resulting in anomalies of the great vessels (right-sided aortic arch), esophageal atresia, bifid uvula, upper limb malformations, congenital heart disease (conotruncal, atrial and ventricular septal defects), a short philtrum of the upper lip, hypertelorism, an antimongoloid slant to the eyes, mandibular hypoplasia, and low-set, often notched ears.⁶ A variable degree of hypoplasia of the thymus and parathyroid glands (partial DiGeorge syndrome) is more frequent than total aplasia.⁷ Those with complete DiGeorge syndrome are susceptible to infections with opportunistic pathogens and to graft-versus-host disease (GVHD) from nonirradiated blood transfusions. There are many clinical similarities among DiGeorge syndrome, velocardiofacial syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome, and retinoic acid toxicity.^{4,5}

Patients with DiGeorge syndrome are usually only mildly lymphopenic.^{7,8} However, the percentage of CD3+ T cells is variably decreased. Immunoglobulin concentrations are usually normal, although sometimes IgE is elevated, and IgA might be low.^{7,8} Responses of blood lymphocytes after mitogen stimulation have been

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Received for publication January 3, 2002; revised February 5, 2002; accepted for publication February 5, 2002.

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0091-6749/2002 \$35.00 + 0 1/10/123617

doi:10.1067/mai.2002.123617

TABLE I. Locations of faulty genes in cellular immunodeficiency disorders

Chromosome	Disease
1q21	MCH class II antigen deficiency caused by RFX5 mutation*
1q42-43	Chédiak-Higashi syndrome*
2q12	CD8 lymphocytopenia caused by ZAP-70 deficiency*
5p13	SCID caused by IL-7R α -chain deficiency*
6p21.3	MHC class I antigen defect caused by mutations in <i>TAP1</i> or <i>TAP2</i> *
6q22-q23	<i>IFNGR1</i> mutations*
8q21	Nijmegen breakage syndrome caused by mutations in Nibrin*
9p13	Cartilage hair hypoplasia caused by mutations in endoribonuclease RMRP*
10p13	SCID (Athabaskan, radiation sensitive) caused by mutations in the Artemis gene*
10p13	DiGeorge syndrome-velocardiofacial syndrome
11p13	IL-2R α -chain deficiency*
11p13	SCID caused by <i>RAG1</i> or <i>RAG2</i> deficiencies*
11q22.3	AT attributable to AT mutation, causing deficiency of DNA-dependent kinase*
11q23	CD3 γ - or ϵ -chain deficiency*
13q	MHC class II antigen deficiency caused by <i>RFXAP</i> mutation*
14q13.1	PNP deficiency*
16p13	MHC class II antigen deficiency caused by <i>CITA</i> mutation*
17	Human nude defect*
19p13.1	SCID caused by Jak3 deficiency*
20q13.11	SCID caused by ADA deficiency*
22q11.2	DiGeorge syndrome
Xp11.23	WAS caused by WASP deficiency*
Xq13.1	X-linked SCID caused by common γ c deficiency*
Xq24-26	X-linked lymphoproliferative syndrome caused by mutations in the <i>SH2D1A</i> gene*

AT, Ataxia-telangiectasia.

*Gene cloned and sequenced; gene product known.

absent, reduced, or normal, depending on the degree of thymic deficiency.⁷ Thymic tissue, when found, does contain Hassall's corpuscles and a normal density of thymocytes; corticomedullary distinction is present. Lymphoid follicles are usually present, but lymph node paracortical areas and thymus-dependent regions of the spleen show variable degrees of depletion.

DiGeorge syndrome has occurred in both male and female patients. It is rarely familial, but cases of apparent autosomal dominant inheritance have been reported.⁵ Microdeletions of specific DNA sequences from chromosome 22q11.2 (the DiGeorge chromosomal region) have been shown in a majority of patients,⁹⁻¹¹ and several candidate genes have been identified in this region.^{5,9,12-14} There appears to be an excess of 22q11.2 deletions of maternal origin.¹⁵ Another deletion associated with DiGeorge and velocardiofacial syndromes has been identified on chromosome 10p13.¹⁶⁻¹⁸

No immunologic treatment is needed for the partial form. If patients with the partial DiGeorge syndrome do not have a severe cardiac lesion, they have few clinical problems, except that some experience seizures and developmental delay. Three patients with complete DiGeorge syndrome have experienced immunologic reconstitution after unfractionated HLA-identical bone marrow transplantation.¹⁹ Transplantation of cultured, mature thymic epithelial explants has successfully reconstituted the immune function of several infants with the complete DiGeorge syndrome.²⁰

SEVERE COMBINED IMMUNODEFICIENCY

Severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID) is a fatal syndrome of diverse genetic cause characterized by profound deficiencies of T- and B-cell (and sometimes NK-cell) function.²¹⁻²⁴ Affected infants present in the first few months of life with frequent episodes of diarrhea, pneumonia, otitis, sepsis, and cutaneous infections. Persistent infections with opportunistic organisms, such as *Candida albicans*, *Pneumocystis carinii*, varicella zoster virus, parainfluenzae 3 virus, respiratory syncytial virus, adenovirus, cytomegalovirus, EBV, and BCG lead to death. These infants also lack the ability to reject foreign tissue and are therefore at risk for GVHD from maternal T cells that cross into the fetal circulation while the infant with SCID is in utero or from T lymphocytes in nonirradiated blood products or allogeneic bone marrow.²⁵

Infants with SCID are lymphopenic.^{22,26} They have an absence of lymphocyte proliferative responses to mitogens, antigens, and allogeneic cells in vitro, even on samples collected in utero or from cord blood. Therefore physicians caring for newborns need to be aware that the normal range for the cord blood absolute lymphocyte count is 2000 to 11,000/mm³ and to arrange for T-cell phenotypic and functional studies to be performed on blood from neonates with values of less than this range.^{22,26,27} The normal absolute lymphocyte count is much higher at 6 to 7 months of age, when most cases of SCID are diagnosed, and therefore any count of less than 4000/mm³ at that age is considered lymphopenic.²⁸ Serum immunoglobulin concentrations range from diminished to absent, and no antibody formation occurs after immunization. Typically, all patients with SCID have very small thymuses (usually <1 g) that fail to descend from the neck, contain no thymocytes, and lack corticomedullary distinction and Hassall's corpuscles. However, the thymic epithelium is normal, and results of bone marrow stem-cell transplantation have shown that these tiny thymuses are capable of supporting normal T-cell development.²⁹ Thymus-dependent areas of the spleen are depleted of lymphocytes in patients with SCID, and lymph nodes, tonsils, adenoids, and Peyer's patches are absent or extremely underdeveloped.

In the 51 years since the initial description of SCID,¹ it has become evident that the genetic origins of this condition are quite diverse.^{23,24,30} X-linked SCID (SCID-X1) is the most common form, accounting for approximately 44% of US cases (Fig 2).^{26,24} Mutated genes on

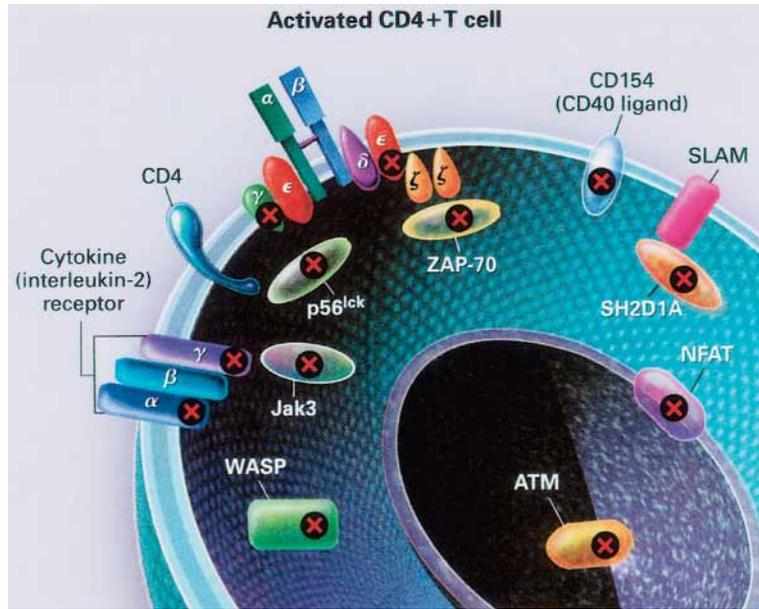


FIG 1. Locations of mutant proteins in activated CD4⁺ T cells identified in primary immunodeficiency diseases. Each mutant protein is identified by a red "X." *SLAM*, Signaling lymphocyte activation molecule; *SH2D1A*, SLAM-associated protein; *ATM*, ataxia-telangiectasia mutation; *NFAT*, nuclear factor of activated T cells; *WASP*, Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome protein; β_2m , β_2 -microglobulin; *RFX*, *RFXAP*, and *CIITA*, transcription factors. Used with permission from *N Engl J Med*. 2000;343:1317.

autosomal chromosomes have been identified in 6 genetic types of SCID: adenosine deaminase (ADA) deficiency, Janus kinase 3 (Jak3) deficiency, IL-7 receptor α -chain deficiency (IL-7R α), recombinase-activating gene (*RAG1* or *RAG2*) deficiencies, Artemis deficiency, and CD45 deficiency. There are likely other causes yet to be discovered (Table II).^{24,31}

X-linked SCID

Despite the uniformly profound lack of T- or B-cell function, patients with SCID-X1 usually have few or no T or NK cells but a normal or elevated number of B cells (Table II).^{22,26,27,32} However, SCID-X1 B cells do not produce immunoglobulin normally, even after T-cell reconstitution by means of bone marrow transplantation.^{22,26} The abnormal gene in SCID-X1 was mapped by using restriction fragment length polymorphism analysis to the Xq13 region³³ and later identified as the gene encoding a common γ -chain receptor (γ_c) shared by several cytokine receptors, including those for IL-2, IL-4, IL-7, IL-9, IL-15, and IL-21 (Fig 3).³⁴⁻³⁶ Of the first 136 patients studied, 95 distinct mutations spanning all 8 *IL2RG* exons were identified, most of them consisting of small changes at the level of one to a few nucleotides.³⁷ These mutations resulted in abnormal γ_c chains in two thirds of the cases and absent γ_c protein in the remainder. The finding that the mutated gene results in faulty signaling through several cytokine receptors explains how multiple cell types can be affected by a mutation in a single gene.^{36,38,39}

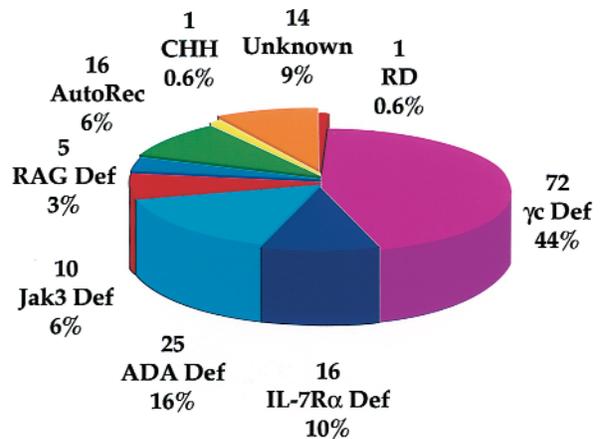


FIG 2. Relative frequencies of the different genetic types of SCID among 160 patients seen consecutively over 3 decades. *RD*, Reticular dysgenesis; *CHH*, cartilage hair hypoplasia.

Autosomal recessive SCID caused by ADA

An absence of the enzyme ADA has been observed in approximately 16% of patients with SCID.^{22,24,26,40} The gene encoding ADA is on chromosome 20q13-ter and was cloned and sequenced over a decade ago.⁴⁰ There are certain distinguishing features of ADA deficiency, including the presence of multiple skeletal abnormalities of chondro-osseous dysplasia on radiographic examination;

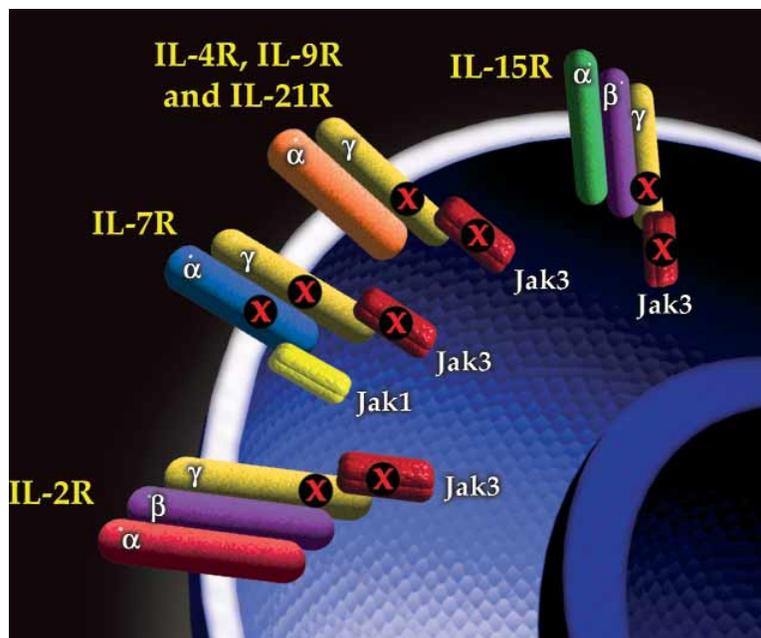


FIG 3. Diagram showing that Jak3 is the major signal transducer for the common γ c shared by multiple cytokine receptors. Mutations in the gene encoding Jak3 result in a form of autosomal recessive SCID that mimics SCID-X1 phenotypically.

TABLE II. Molecular causes of SCID and characteristic lymphocyte phenotypes

	Lymphocyte phenotype
X-linked SCID	
(1) γ c gene mutations	T(-),B(+),NK(-)
Autosomal Recessive SCID	
(1) ADA gene mutations	T(-),B(-),NK(-)
(2) Jak3 gene mutations	T(-),B(+),NK(-)
(3) IL7R α -chain gene mutations	T(-),B(+),NK(+)
(4) RAG1 or RAG2 mutations	T(-),B(-),NK(+)
(5) Artemis mutations	T(-),B(-),NK(+)
(6) CD45 gene mutations	T(-),B+

these occur predominantly at the costochondral junctions, at the apophyses of the iliac bones, and in the vertebral bodies (causing a bone-in-bone effect).⁴¹ ADA-deficient infants usually have a much more profound lymphopenia than those with other types of SCID, with mean absolute lymphocyte counts of less than 500/mm³. ADA deficiency results in pronounced accumulations of adenosine, 2'-deoxyadenosine, and 2'-*o*-methyladenosine.⁴⁰ The latter metabolites directly or indirectly lead to apoptosis of thymocytes and circulating lymphocytes, which causes the immunodeficiency. As with other types of SCID, ADA deficiency can be cured with HLA-identical or haploidentical T cell-depleted bone marrow transplantation, which remains the treatment of choice.^{25,26} Enzyme replacement therapy with polyethylene glycol-modified bovine ADA administered subcutaneously once weekly has resulted in

both clinical and immunologic improvement in more than 100 ADA-deficient patients.⁴²⁻⁴⁴ However, the immunocompetence achieved is not nearly so great as that achieved with bone marrow transplantation.²⁶ In view of this, polyethylene glycol-modified bovine ADA therapy should not be initiated if bone marrow transplantation is contemplated because it will confer graft-rejection capability on the infant. After T-cell function is effected by bone marrow transplantation (without pretransplantation chemotherapy), infants with ADA deficiency generally have B-cell function.

Autosomal recessive SCID caused by Jak3 deficiency

Patients with autosomal recessive SCID caused by Jak3 deficiency resemble patients with all other types of SCID in their susceptibility to infection and to GVHD from allogeneic T cells. However, they have lymphocyte characteristics most closely resembling those of patients with X-linked SCID, including an elevated percentage of B cells and very low percentages of T and NK cells (Table II).^{22,26} Because Jak3 is the only signaling molecule known to be associated with γ c, it was a candidate gene for mutations leading to autosomal recessive SCID of unknown molecular type (Fig 3).⁴⁵⁻⁴⁷ Thus far, more than 20 patients who lack Jak3 have been identified (Fig 2).^{26,48-50} Even after successful T-cell reconstitution by means of transplantation of haploidentical stem cells, Jak3-deficient infants with SCID fail to have persistent development of NK cells.²⁵ Moreover, in further similarity to patients with SCID-X1, they often fail to have nor-

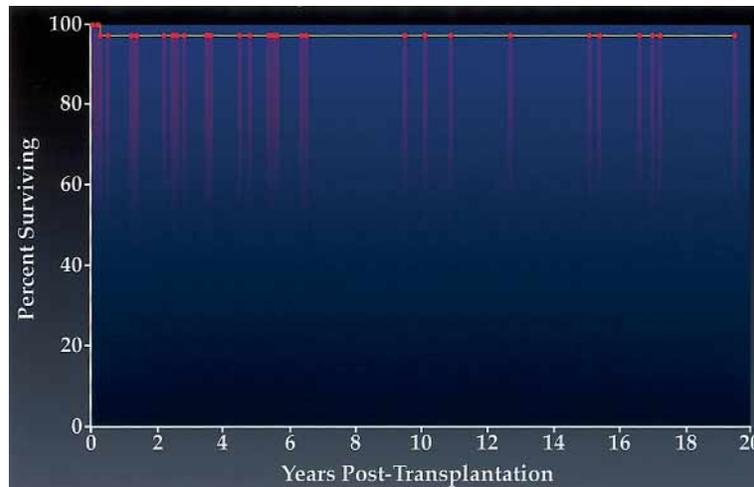


FIG 4. Kaplan-Meier survival curve for 32 consecutive infants with SCID who received bone marrow transplants at Duke University Medical Center from HLA-identical (n = 2) or haploidentical (n = 30) donors before they were 3.5 months of age without pretransplantation chemoablation and without posttransplantation GVHD prophylaxis. Thirty-one (97%) infants survive for periods of 4 months to 20 years after transplantation. The 1 death occurred from a cytomegalovirus infection.

mal B-cell function after transplantation, despite their high numbers of B cells. Their failure to have NK cells or B-cell function is believed to be due to the abnormal cytokine receptors of these host B cells.

Autosomal recessive SCID caused by IL-7R α deficiency

Because mice whose genes for either the α chain of the IL-7 receptor or IL-7 itself have been mutated are profoundly deficient in T- and B-cell function but have normal NK cell function,⁵¹ naturally occurring mutations in these genes were sought in some of the author's patients who had T(-)B(+)NK(+) SCID and who had previously been shown not to have either γc or Jak3 deficiency (Table II). Mutations in the gene for IL-7R α on chromosome 5p13 have thus far been found in 16 of the author's patients (Fig 2).^{26,52} These findings imply that the T-cell defect, but not the NK-cell defect, in SCID-X1 and Jak3-deficient SCID results from an inability to signal through the IL-7 receptor (Fig 3). The fact that these patients have normal B-cell function after nonablative haploidentical bone marrow stem-cell transplantation despite lacking donor B cells also suggests that the B-cell defect in SCID-X1 is not due to failure of IL-7 signaling.

Autosomal recessive SCID caused by RAG1 or RAG2 deficiencies

Infants with autosomal recessive SCID caused by mutations in *RAG1* and *RAG2* resemble all others in their infection susceptibility and complete absence of T- or B-cell function. However, their lymphocyte phenotype differs from those of patients with SCID caused by γc , Jak3,

IL7R α , or ADA deficiencies in that they lack both B and T lymphocytes and have primarily NK cells in their circulation (T-B-NK+ SCID, Table II). This particular phenotype suggested a possible problem with their antigen receptor genes, leading to the discovery of mutations in *RAG1* and *RAG2* in some, but not all, such infants with SCID.⁵³⁻⁵⁵ These genes, on chromosome 11p13, encode proteins necessary for somatic rearrangement of antigen receptor genes on T and B cells. The proteins recognize recombination signal sequences and introduce a DNA double-stranded break, permitting V, D, and J gene rearrangements. *RAG1* or *RAG2* mutations result in a functional inability to form antigen receptors through genetic recombination.

Patients with Omenn syndrome also have mutations in *RAG1* or *RAG2* genes, resulting in partial and impaired V(D)J recombinational activity.^{55,56} Omenn syndrome is characterized by the development soon after birth of a generalized erythroderma and desquamation, diarrhea, hepatosplenomegaly, hypereosinophilia, and markedly elevated serum IgE levels. The latter are caused by circulating activated, oligoclonal T lymphocytes that do not respond normally to mitogens or antigens in vitro.^{57,58} Circulating B cells are not found, and lymph node architecture is abnormal because of a lack of germinal centers.⁵⁹ The condition is fatal unless corrected by means of bone marrow transplantation.²⁵

Autosomal recessive SCID caused by deficiencies of the Artemis gene product

The most recently discovered cause of human SCID is a deficiency of a novel V(D)J recombination/DNA repair

factor that belongs to the metallo- β -lactamase superfamily. It is encoded by a gene on chromosome 10p called Artemis.⁶⁰ A deficiency of this factor results in an inability to repair DNA after double-stranded cuts have been made by RAG-1 or RAG-2 gene products in rearranging antigen-receptor genes from their germline configuration. Similar to *RAG1*- and *RAG2*-deficient SCID, this defect results in another form of T(-)B(-)NK(+) SCID, also called Athabascan SCID (Table II). In addition, there is increased radiation sensitivity of both skin fibroblasts and bone marrow cells of those affected with this type of SCID.

Autosomal recessive SCID caused by CD45 deficiency

Another recently discovered molecular defect causing SCID is a mutation in the gene encoding the common leukocyte surface protein CD45.^{61,62} This hematopoietic cell-specific transmembrane protein tyrosine phosphatase functions to regulate Src kinases required for T- and B-cell antigen receptor signal transduction. A 2-month-old male infant presented with a clinical picture of SCID and was found to have a very low number of T cells but a normal number of B cells (Table II). The T cells failed to respond to mitogens, and serum immunoglobulins diminished with time. He was found to have a large deletion at one CD45 allele and a point mutation causing an alteration of the intervening sequence 13-donor splice site at the other.⁶¹ A second case of SCID caused by CD45 deficiency has been reported.⁶² Fig 2 shows the frequency of the various genetic forms of SCID evaluated by the author over the past 3½ decades.

Treatment and prognosis

SCID is a pediatric emergency.^{22,26} Replacement therapy with intravenous immunoglobulin fails to halt the progressively downhill course.⁶³ Unless bone marrow transplantation from HLA-identical or haploidentical donors can be performed, death usually occurs before the patient's first birthday and almost invariably before the second. On the other hand, transplantation in the first 3.5 months of life offers a greater than 97% chance of survival (Fig 4).²⁶ Therefore early diagnosis is essential. Recent studies have shown that the immune reconstitution effected by stem-cell transplants is due to thymic education of the transplanted allogeneic stem cells.²⁹ The thymic output appears to occur sooner and to a greater degree in those infants transplanted in the neonatal period as opposed to those transplanted after that time.^{64,65} Currently, there are more than 400 patients with SCID surviving worldwide as a result of successful bone marrow transplantation.²⁵

ADA deficiency was the first genetic defect in which gene therapy was attempted, although these early efforts were unsuccessful.⁶⁶⁻⁶⁸ However, within the past 2 years, a normal γ c cDNA was successfully transduced into autologous marrow cells of 8 infants with SCID-X1 by means of retroviral gene transfer, with subsequent full correction of their T- and NK-cell defects.⁶⁹ This offers

hope that gene therapy will eventually be the treatment of choice for all patients with SCID or other genetically determined immunodeficiency diseases for whom the molecular basis is known.

COMBINED IMMUNODEFICIENCY

The term combined immunodeficiency (CID) is used to distinguish patients with low, but not absent, T-cell function from those with SCID. Three examples are given below.

Purine nucleoside phosphorylase deficiency

More than 40 patients with CID have been found to have purine nucleoside phosphorylase (PNP) deficiency.⁷⁰ Deaths have occurred from generalized vaccinia, varicella, lymphosarcoma, and GVHD mediated by T cells from nonirradiated allogeneic blood or bone marrow. Two thirds of patients have had neurologic abnormalities ranging from spasticity to mental retardation. One third of patients had autoimmune diseases, the most common of which is autoimmune hemolytic anemia. Most patients have normal or elevated concentrations of all serum immunoglobulins. PNP-deficient patients are as profoundly lymphopenic as those with ADA deficiency, with absolute lymphocyte counts usually less than 500/mm³. T-cell function is low but not absent and is variable with time. The gene encoding PNP is on chromosome 14q13.1, and it has been cloned and sequenced. A variety of mutations have been found in the *PNP* gene in patients with PNP deficiency.⁷¹ Unlike ADA deficiency, serum and urinary uric acid are deficient because PNP is needed to form the urate precursors hypoxanthine and xanthine. Prenatal diagnosis is possible. PNP deficiency is invariably fatal in childhood unless immunologic reconstitution can be achieved. Bone marrow transplantation is the treatment of choice but has thus far been successful in only 3 such patients.^{25,72}

Ataxia-telangiectasia

Ataxia-telangiectasia is a complex CID syndrome with associated neurologic, endocrinologic, hepatic, and cutaneous abnormalities.^{21,73} The most prominent features are progressive cerebellar ataxia, oculocutaneous telangiectasias, chronic sinopulmonary disease, a high incidence of malignancy,⁷⁴ and variable humoral and cellular immunodeficiency. The ataxia typically becomes evident shortly after the child begins to walk and progresses until he or she is confined to a wheelchair, usually by 10 to 12 years of age. The telangiectasias develop at between 3 and 6 years of age. Recurrent, usually bacterial, sinopulmonary infections occur in roughly 80% of these patients. Fatal varicella occurred in one patient, and transfusion-associated GVHD has also been reported.⁷⁵ Selective IgA deficiency is found in from 50% to 80% of those affected.⁷⁶ IgE concentrations are usually low, and IgG2 or total IgG concentrations might be decreased. Specific antibody titers might be decreased or normal. There is impaired (but not absent) cell-mediated immunity *in vivo*, as evi-

denced by delayed skin test anergy and prolonged allograft survival. The percentages of CD3⁺ and CD4⁺ T cells are only modestly low, and in vitro tests of lymphocyte function have generally shown moderately depressed proliferative responses to T- and B-cell mitogens. The thymus is hypoplastic, exhibits poor organization, and is lacking in Hassall's corpuscles. Cells from patients, as well as those of heterozygous carriers, have increased sensitivity to ionizing radiation, defective DNA repair, and frequent chromosomal abnormalities.^{76,77} The malignancies reported in this condition usually have been of the lymphoreticular type, but adenocarcinoma and other forms also have been seen. There is also an increased incidence of malignancy in unaffected relatives.

Inheritance of ataxia-telangiectasia follows an autosomal recessive pattern. The mutated gene (*ATM*) responsible for this defect was mapped by means of restriction fragment length polymorphism analysis to the long arm of chromosome 11 (11q22-23) and was cloned.^{76,78,79} The gene product is a DNA-dependent protein kinase localized predominantly to the nucleus and believed to be involved in mitogenic signal transduction, meiotic recombination, and cell-cycle control.^{73,80-82} No satisfactory definitive treatment has been found.⁷⁶ The most common causes of death are lymphoreticular malignancy and progressive neurologic disease.

Immunodeficiency with thrombocytopenia and eczema (Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome)

The Wiskott-Aldrich syndrome (WAS) is an X-linked recessive syndrome characterized by eczema, thrombocytopenic purpura with normal-appearing megakaryocytes but small defective platelets, and undue susceptibility to infection.^{21,23} Patients usually present during infancy with prolonged bleeding from the circumcision site, bloody diarrhea, or excessive bruising. Atopic dermatitis and recurrent infections usually also develop during the first year of life. Infections are usually those produced by pneumococci and other encapsulated bacteria, resulting in otitis media, pneumonia, meningitis, or sepsis. Later, infections with opportunistic agents, such as *Pneumocystis carinii* and the herpesviruses, become more problematic. Autoimmune cytopenias and vasculitis are common in those who live beyond infancy. Survival beyond the teens is rare. Infections, vasculitis, and bleeding are major causes of death, but the most common cause of death in patients with WAS currently is EBV-induced lymphoreticular malignancy.⁸³

Patients with WAS have an impaired humoral immune response to polysaccharide antigens, as evidenced by absent or greatly diminished isohemagglutinins and poor or absent antibody responses to polysaccharide antigens.^{21,84,85} In addition, antibody titers to protein antigens decrease with time. Most often there is a low serum IgM, an elevated IgA and IgE, and a normal or slightly low IgG concentration. Flow cytometry of blood lymphocytes has shown a moderately reduced percentage of T cells, and lymphocyte responses to mitogens are moderately depressed.⁸⁶

The mutated gene responsible for this defect was mapped to Xp11.22-11.2384⁸⁷ and isolated in 1994 by Derry et al.⁸⁸ It was found to be limited in expression to lymphocytic and megakaryocytic lineages. The gene product, a 501-amino-acid proline-rich protein that lacks a hydrophobic transmembrane domain, was designated WASP (WAS protein). It has been shown to bind CDC42H2 and rac, members of the Rho family of GTPases, which are important in actin polymerization.⁸⁸⁻⁹¹ A large and varied number of mutations in the *WASP* gene have been identified in patients with WAS,⁹²⁻⁹⁴ with some correlation to the site of the mutation with severity of infection susceptibility or other problems in one series⁹⁵ but not in others.^{83,96} Isolated X-linked thrombocytopenia is also caused by mutations in the *WASP* gene.⁹⁷ Carriers can be detected by the finding of non-random X-chromosome inactivation in several hematopoietic cell lineages or by detection of the mutated gene (if known in the family).⁹⁸⁻¹⁰⁰ Prenatal diagnosis of WAS can also be made by means of chorionic villous sampling or amniocentesis if the mutation is known in that family. Two families with apparent autosomal inheritance of a clinical phenotype similar to that of WAS have been reported,^{101,102} and in one case a girl was shown to have this as an X-linked defect.¹⁰³

Numerous patients with WAS have had complete corrections of both the platelet and the immunologic abnormalities by means of bone marrow transplants from HLA-identical siblings after being conditioned with irradiation or busulfan and cyclophosphamide.¹⁰⁴ Success has been minimal with T cell-depleted haploidentical stem-cell transplants in WAS, primarily because of resistance to engraftment.^{25,105,106} Recently, some success has been achieved in the treatment of WAS with matched unrelated donor transplants when done in those less than 5 years of age.^{25,105} It is likely that matched cord blood transplants will be similarly successful because in both cases T cells can be left in the donor cell suspension. Several patients who required splenectomy for uncontrollable bleeding had impressive increases in their platelet counts and have done well clinically while being administered prophylactic antibiotics and intravenous immunoglobulin.^{107,108}

T-CELL ACTIVATION DEFECTS

These conditions are characterized by the presence of normal or elevated numbers of blood T cells that appear phenotypically normal but fail to proliferate or produce cytokines in response to stimulation with mitogens, antigens, or other signals delivered to the T-cell antigen receptor (TCR) because of defective signal transduction from the TCR to intracellular metabolic pathways. They can be caused by mutations in genes for a variety of cell-surface molecules or signal-transduction molecules. Several examples will be described below. These patients have problems similar to those of other T cell-deficient individuals, and some with severe T-cell activation defects might clinically resemble patients with SCID.

Defective expression of the TCR-CD3 complex (Ti-CD3)

The first type of the defective expression of Ti-CD3 was found in 2 male siblings in a Spanish family. The proband presented with severe infections and died at 31 months of age with autoimmune hemolytic anemia and viral pneumonia. His lymphocytes had responded poorly to mitogens and to anti-CD3 *in vitro* and could not be stimulated to develop cytotoxic T cells. However, his antibody responses to protein antigens had been normal, indicating normal T_H function. His 12-year-old brother was healthy, but he had almost no CD3-bearing T cells and had IgG2 deficiency similar to that of his sibling. The defect in this family was shown to be attributable to mutations in the CD3 γ chain.¹⁰⁹ The second form of this disorder was found in a 4-year-old French boy who had recurrent *Haemophilus influenzae* pneumonia and otitis media in early life but is now healthy. He had a partial defect in expression of Ti-CD3, resulting in an approximately half normal percentage of CD3⁺ cells, all with very low CD3 staining on flow cytometry. His T cells did not proliferate in response to anti-CD3; however, they did respond normally to stimulation with anti-CD28.¹⁰⁹ The defect was shown to be due to 2 independent CD3 ϵ gene mutations, leading to defective CD3 ϵ chain synthesis and preventing normal association and membrane expression of the Ti-CD3 complex.¹¹⁰

Zeta chain-associated protein 70 deficiency

Patients with CD8 lymphocytopenia caused by zeta chain-associated protein 70 (ZAP-70) deficiency present during infancy with severe, recurrent, and sometimes fatal infections; however, they often live longer and present later in life than patients with SCID. More than 8 cases have been reported, and a majority were in Mennonites.¹¹¹⁻¹¹³ They have normal, low, or elevated serum immunoglobulin concentrations and normal or elevated numbers of circulating CD4⁺ T lymphocytes but essentially no CD8⁺ cells. These CD4⁺ T cells fail to respond to mitogens or allogeneic cells *in vitro* or to generate cytotoxic T lymphocytes. By contrast, NK activity is normal. The thymus of one patient exhibited normal architecture; there were normal numbers of CD4-CD8 double-positive thymocytes but an absence of CD8 single-positive thymocytes. This condition has been shown to be caused by mutations in the gene encoding ZAP-70, a non-src family protein tyrosine kinase important in T-cell signaling.^{112,114} The gene is on chromosome 2 at position q12. ZAP-70 has been shown to have an essential role in both positive and negative selection in the thymus.¹¹³ The hypothesis as to why there are normal numbers of CD4⁺ T cells is that thymocytes can use the other member of the same tyrosine kinase family, Syk, to facilitate positive selection of CD4⁺ cells. In addition, there is a stronger association of Lck with CD4⁺ than with CD8⁺ cells. Syk is present at 4-fold higher levels in thymocytes than in peripheral T cells, possibly accounting for the lack of normal responses by the CD4⁺ blood T cells.

Defective expression of MHC antigens

MHC class I antigen deficiency. An isolated deficiency of MHC class I antigens is rare, and the resulting immunodeficiency is milder than that in SCID, contributing to a later age of presentation. Sera from affected patients contain normal quantities of class I MHC antigens and β_2 -microglobulin, but class I MHC antigens are not detected on any cells in the body. There is a deficiency of CD8⁺, but not CD4⁺, T cells. Mutations have been found in 2 genes within the MHC locus on chromosome 6 that encode the peptide transporter proteins, *TAP1* and *TAP2*.¹¹⁵⁻¹¹⁹ TAP proteins function to transport peptide antigens from the cytoplasm across the Golgi apparatus membrane to join the α chain of MHC class I molecules and β_2 -microglobulin. The complex can then move to the cell surface; if the assembly of the complex cannot be completed because there is no peptide antigen, the MHC class I complex is destroyed in the cytoplasm.¹²⁰

MHC class II antigen deficiency. Many patients affected with this autosomal recessive syndrome are of North African descent.¹²¹ More than 70 patients have been identified. They present in infancy with persistent diarrhea, often associated with cryptosporidiosis, *Pneumocystis carinii* or bacterial pneumonia, septicemia, and viral or monilial infections. Nevertheless, their immunodeficiency is not as severe as that seen in patients with SCID, as evidenced by their lack of BCG-osis or GVHD from nonirradiated blood transfusions.¹²² MHC class II-deficient patients have a very low number of CD4⁺ T cells but normal or elevated numbers of CD8⁺ T cells. Lymphopenia is only moderate. The MHC class II antigens HLA-DP, DQ, and DR are undetectable on blood B cells and monocytes. The patients have impaired antigen-specific responses caused by the absence of these antigen-presenting molecules. In addition, MHC antigen-deficient B cells fail to stimulate allogeneic cells in mixed leukocyte culture. Lymphocytes respond normally to mitogens but not to antigens. The thymus and other lymphoid organs are severely hypoplastic. The lack of class II molecules results in abnormal thymic selection because recognition of HLA molecules by thymocytes is central to both positive and negative selection. The latter results in circulating CD4⁺ T cells that have altered CDR3 profiles.¹²² The associated defects of both B- and T-cell immunity and of HLA expression emphasize the important biologic role for HLA determinants in effective immune cell cooperation.

Four different molecular defects resulting in impaired expression of MHC class II antigens have been identified.¹²³ In one there is a mutation in the gene on chromosome 1q that encodes a protein called RFX5, a subunit of RFX, a multiprotein complex that binds the X-box motif of MHC-II promoters.¹²⁴ A second form is caused by mutations in a gene on chromosome 13q that encodes a second 36-kd subunit of the RFX complex, called RFX-associated protein (RFXAP).¹²⁵ The most recently discovered and most common cause of MHC class II defects are mutations in *RFXANK*, the gene encoding a third subunit of RFX.¹²⁶ In a fourth type there

is a mutation in the gene on chromosome 16p13 that encodes a novel MHC class II transactivator, a non-DNA-binding coactivator that controls the cell-type specificity and inducibility of MHC class II expression.¹²⁷ All of these defects cause impairment in the coordinate expression of MHC class II molecules on the surface of B cells and macrophages.

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