

African-American lupus patient immune cell characteristics may increase disease severity

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Systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) is an autoimmune disease that affects multiple organs. SLE severity is highly variable, and this variability is known to be partially dependent on ancestral background. Notably, African Americans are at a higher risk of developing SLE and suffer from a more severe form of the disease compared with European Americans.

In this issue of *JCI Insight*, Laurence Menard and colleagues at Bristol-Myers Squibb investigated differences in immune cell characteristics that may contribute to SLE severity in African Americans. Menard and colleagues isolated B cells, a group of immune cells that are known to be involved in SLE pathogenesis, from SLE patients and healthy volunteers.

They demonstrated that B cells from African American patients expressed more proteins that are characteristic of activated B cells than European American patients. These differences were not attributable to differences in disease severity or medication.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the enhanced activation of B cells in African American patients may contribute to SLE severity.

More information: Laurence C. Menard et al, B cells from African American lupus patients exhibit an activated phenotype, *JCI Insight* (2016). [DOI: 10.1172/jci.insight.87310](https://doi.org/10.1172/jci.insight.87310)

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