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Immune cell subset is associated with development of gastrointestinal GVHD after HSCT

May 5 2016

Gastrointestinal graft vs. host disease (GI-GVHD) is a life threatening complication that can occur after allogeneic hematopoietic cell transplantation, a procedure that is commonly used to treat patients with leukemia. There is currently no way to predict which patients will develop GI-GVHD before the presentation of clinical symptoms. Unfortunately, the symptoms of GI-GVHD are not very specific and many patients undergo treatment for GI-GVHD in the absence of a confirmed diagnosis because the disease is so dangerous.

In this issue of *JCI Insight*, researchers led by Sophie Paczesny of Indiana University School of Medicine report the identification of a subset of immune cells that express the protein CD146 and are increased in patients that went on to develop GI-GVHD prior to the onset of clinical symptoms.

Paczesny and colleagues demonstrated that mice lacking CD146-expressing T cells had improved survival following allogeneic hematopoietic cell transplantation.

These findings indicate that the CD146-expressing cell subset could potentially be used as a marker to identify patients who are likely to develop GI-GVHD after hematopoietic cell transplantation.

More information: Wei Li et al, Proteomics analysis reveals a

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Th17-prone cell population in presymptomatic graft-versus-host disease, *JCI Insight* (2016). DOI: 10.1172/jci.insight.86660

Provided by Journal of Clinical Investigation

Citation: Immune cell subset is associated with development of gastrointestinal GVHD after HSCT (2016, May 5) retrieved 23 April 2024 from https://medicalxpress.com/news/2016-05-immune-cell-subset-gastrointestinal-gvhd.html

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