CD28 NULL T LYMPHOCYTES ARE EXPANDED IN YOUNG WOMEN WITH POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME

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Authors: Giampaolo Niccoli, Rosanna Apa, Giovanna Liuzzo, Cristina Spaziani, Francesca Sagnella, Andrea Silenzi, Rocco A. Montone, Giuseppe Ferrante, Antonio Lanzone, Filippo Crea, Institute of Cardiology, Catholic University of Sacred Heart, Rome, Italy

Background: Young women affected by polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOs) have been found to have an increased risk of cardiovascular (CV) disease. Insulin resistance, metabolic syndrome and raised C-reactive protein (CRP) levels may contribute to this risk; however, other mechanisms might be involved. Of note, the expansion CD4+CD28null T cells, an unusual aggressive T lymphocyte population able to produce large amount of INF-gamma, has been recently associated with recurrent instability in patients with acute coronary syndromes. We tested the hypothesis that an expansion of CD4+CD28null T cells is present in young women affected by PCO.

Methods: Peripheral blood T cells from 30 PCOs women with normal insulin sensitivity (age 25±5) (G1), 30 PCOs women with insulin resistance (age 25±5) (G2) and 23 healthy women (age 30±6) (G3) were analyzed for the distribution of T cell subsets by flow cytometry and CD4+CD28null T cell frequency was compared among the three groups. CRP serum levels were assessed by a high sensitivity nephelometric assay and compared among the three groups. Predictors of CD4+CD28null T cells frequency were assessed among demographic, clinical data, cardiovascular risk factors and laboratory data, including lipid-glycemic prophyle, androgen levels and finally CRP levels.

Results: CD4+CD28null cell frequency was significantly higher in G1 (2.7, 1.2-4) and in G2 (2.5, 1.2-5) than G3 (0.2, 0.1-0.9; Bonferroni adjusted (Ba)-p<0.001), whereas no significant difference was found between G1 and G2 (Ba-p=1). Conversely, CRP levels were significantly higher in G2 (2.5, 1.2-4.6 mg/L) than in G1 (1.1, 0.8-2.1, Ba-p=0.003) and in G3 (0.8±2.6 mg/L, Ba-p<0.001), with a trend for higher levels in G1 as compared to G3 (Ba-p=0.06). Multiple linear regression analysis showed that PCO status independently predicts CD4+CD28null cell frequency (B=1.9, standard error=2.04, p<0.001).

Conclusion: PCOs women show an expansion of CD4+CD28null T cells. This finding may shed new light on the mechanisms leading to an increased cardiovascular risk in women affected by PCO.