

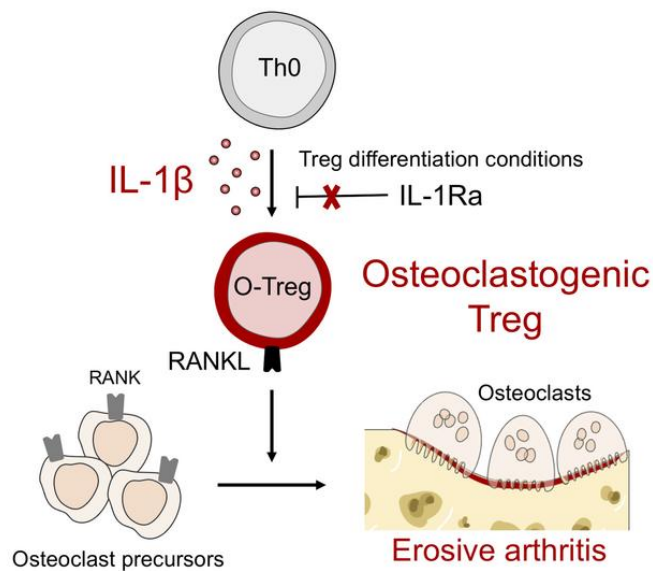
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IL-1 β -driven osteoclastogenic T regulatory cells accelerate bone erosion in arthritis

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Abstract

IL-1 β is a pro-inflammatory mediator with roles in innate and adaptive immunity. Here we show that IL-1 β contributes to autoimmune arthritis by inducing osteoclastogenic capacity in T regulatory cells (Tregs). Using mice with joint inflammation arising through deficiency of the IL-1 receptor antagonist (*Il1rn*^{-/-}), we observed that IL-1 β blockade attenuated disease more effectively in early arthritis than in established arthritis, especially with respect to bone erosion. Protection was accompanied by a reduction in synovial CD4⁺Foxp3⁺ Tregs that displayed preserved suppressive capacity and aerobic metabolism but aberrant expression of RANKL and a striking capacity to drive RANKL-dependent osteoclast differentiation. Both *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs and wild-type Tregs differentiated with IL-1 β accelerated bone erosion upon adoptive transfer. Human Tregs exhibited analogous differentiation, and corresponding RANKL^{hi}Foxp3⁺ T cells could be identified in rheumatoid arthritis synovial tissue. Together, these findings identify IL-1 β -induced osteoclastogenic Tregs (O-Tregs) as a contributor to bone erosion in arthritis.

Introduction

IL-1 is a pleiotropic cytokine that plays a key role in the pathogenesis of inflammatory arthritis, including the highly prevalent disease rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and its less common pediatric counterpart juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) (1). Two members of the IL-1 subfamily, IL-1 α and IL-1 β , engage a broad program of pathways that promote inflammation, accelerating myeloid development, enhancing expression of endothelial adhesion molecules, and activating both hematopoietic and stromal lineages (2). Within the joint, IL-1 contributes to joint injury by stimulating release of degradative enzymes, including matrix metalloproteinases, cathepsins, and mast cell proteases (3). IL-1 also promotes the development of osteoclasts and thereby contributes to bone erosions that degrade joint function (4).

In animal models, the pivotal contribution of IL-1 to arthritis is reflected in the dense resistance of mice lacking IL-1 or its receptor to experimental arthritis, and the important role for IL-1 as an amplifier in T cell-mediated arthritis (5-7). In the Balb/c background, mice lacking the endogenous IL-1 receptor antagonist (IL-1Ra, encoded by *Il1rn*) rapidly develop highly inflammatory and destructive joint disease (8). *Il1rn*^{-/-} arthritis affords an opportunity to dissect in detail the mechanisms by which unrestrained IL-1 activity causes joint disease. Perhaps surprisingly, lymphocytes represent major pathogenic actors: CD4⁺ T cells from *Il1rn*^{-/-} donors induce arthritis in *nu/nu* mice by directing the traffic of IL-17-producing $\gamma\delta$ T cells to the joint (9, 10). The cytokines IL-1 β , TNF and IL-17A are each essential to the evolution of disease, while IL-1 α , IL-6, and B cells are dispensable (9-13). *Il1rn*^{-/-} arthritis thus contrasts mechanistically with collagen-induced arthritis and K/BxN arthritis, models in which joint inflammation is mediated primarily by immune complexes formed by autoantibodies, mirroring the division in human disease between immune complex-independent and immune complex-dependent arthritis (14).

Effector T cell pathways have been well studied in *Il1rn*^{-/-} arthritis, but the role of regulatory T cells (Tregs) remains incompletely defined. Tregs are characterized by the signature transcription factor FOXP3 and play an essential role in suppressing autoimmunity (15). Mice require continuous *Foxp3* expression throughout life to avoid autoimmunity (16, 17). Tregs are enriched in inflamed human joints compared with

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peripheral blood, and murine studies confirm a role for Tregs in suppressing synovial inflammation (18-20). Beyond limiting the activity of effector T cells, Tregs can constrain joint destruction by directly inhibiting osteoclast development through contact-dependent and -independent mechanisms (20-22).

Intriguingly, environmental factors can convert Tregs into cells that promote rather than attenuate inflammatory pathology. In collagen-induced arthritis, IL-6 drives CD25^{lo}Foxp3⁺Tregs to lose *Foxp3* expression and acquire both IL-17 and the osteoclast-differentiating factor receptor activator of nuclear factor- κ B ligand (RANKL), becoming “exFoxp3” cells that accelerate bone erosion (23). Tregs can also be driven to express IL-17 while maintaining expression of *Foxp3*, including by exposure to IL-1, potentially rendering them pro- rather than anti-inflammatory (24, 25). The role of IL-1 as a modulator of Treg function in arthritis remains unknown.

Using *Il1rn*^{-/-} and *Foxp3*^{eGFP}-*Il1rn*^{-/-} animals, together with IL-1 inhibitors, we studied the course of arthritis in *Il1rn*^{-/-} arthritis. We found that early IL-1 β blockade attenuated disease severity more effectively than delayed IL-1 β blockade, in particular with respect to bone erosion. Unexpectedly, *Foxp3*-expressing *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs developed expression of RANKL and a marked capacity to induce osteoclast differentiation, in a manner inhibited by IL-1 β blockade. Adoptive transfer of *Il1rn*^{-/-} *Foxp3*⁺CD4⁺ T cells augmented bone erosion in a second model of arthritis, confirming their pathogenic capacity. WT Tregs differentiated in the presence of IL-1 β acquired RANKL expression and osteoclastogenic function. Comparable pathogenic Tregs could be generated from human lymphocytes via IL-1 β and were markedly expanded in human RA tissues. Together, these findings implicate Tregs driven by IL-1 β to become osteoclastogenic Tregs (O-Tregs) as a to our knowledge previously undescribed mediator of bone erosion in autoimmune arthritis.

Results

Early administration of IL-1 blockade ameliorates swelling and bone erosion in arthritis

IL-1Ra-deficient (*Il1rn*^{-/-}) mice spontaneously develop arthritis in an IL-17- and T-cell-dependent manner, reflecting the impact of uncontested IL-1 β signaling on lymphocyte

development and function (8). We used cytokine blockade to examine the timecourse of this process. Administration of a specific anti-IL-1 β antibody early in disease, at time of weaning, led to a sustained improvement in arthritis, whereas IL-1 β blockade administered after a 2-week delay only partially ameliorated disease (Figure 1A,B). Histological analysis 6 weeks after weaning revealed that early IL-1 β blockade was particularly effective for bone erosion (Figures 1C,D and S1). The impact on bone was further confirmed by high-resolution X-ray computed tomography (micro-CT), documenting a measurable reduction in bone injury only when cytokine blockade was initiated early in disease (Figure 1E,F).

To understand the mechanism of this effect, we isolated synovial tissue cells from *Il1rn*^{-/-} mice treated with isotype control, early anti-IL-1 β or late anti-IL-1 β , followed by overnight stimulation with PMA/ionomycin to assess cytokine production by intracellular staining. *Il1rn*^{-/-} CD4⁺ T cells exhibited both IL-17A and IFN γ production, abrogated to a greater degree with early than late cytokine blockade, paralleling disease amelioration (Figure 1G,H,I). To track the balance of effector and regulatory T cells, we generated *Il1rn*^{-/-} x Balb/C Foxp3^{eGFP} mice. Paradoxically, the proportion of CD3⁺CD4⁺Foxp3⁺ cells increased in inflamed joints and decreased with treatment, especially if treatment was initiated early in the disease course (Figure 1J).

Highly suppressive Foxp3⁺ regulatory T cells are expanded in *Il1rn*^{-/-} synovium

Tregs from inflamed *Il1rn*^{-/-} joints displayed the Th17 markers CCR6 and CD39 (Figure 2A,B). However, stimulation with PMA/ionomycin failed to elicit production of IL-17A by *Il1rn*^{-/-} Foxp3⁺ cells, whereas Foxp3⁻ T cells were strongly positive (Figure 2C,D). Consistent with this result, *Il1rn*^{-/-} Foxp3⁺ cells showed no expression of ROR γ t (Figure 2E,F) and sorted *Il1rn*^{-/-} Foxp3⁺ cells from lymph nodes exhibited no increase in expression of mRNA for *Il17* (Figure S2). Expression of CCR6 in the absence of IL-17 suggested anti-Th17 specialization rather than Th17 conversion (26). Studies of suppressive function supported this conclusion. Using lymph nodes as a cell source, sorted Tregs (CD3⁺CD4⁺Foxp3^{eGFP+}) from *Il1rn*^{-/-} and WT mice were co-cultured with effector T cells (CD3⁺CD4⁺Foxp3^{eGFP-}) from WT mice stained with CellTrace Violet to track proliferation by dye dilution after 72h stimulation with anti-CD3/CD28 beads. Tregs from untreated *Il1rn*^{-/-} mice exhibited suppressive capacity superior to that of WT

Tregs, a difference neutralized by *in vivo* IL-1 β blockade (Figure 2G,H and S3). Comparable findings were found when Tregs were incubated with Teff cells from the same donor type (Figure 2I,J). Moreover, after 72h of stimulation *in vitro* we observed no loss of Foxp3 expression by *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs (Figure S4A,B) suggesting that Foxp3 expression by these Tregs is stable, as shown in other contexts (27). Stability was further confirmed by adoptive transfer of Foxp3⁺ T cells into healthy recipient animals, finding *in vivo* persistence in blood and tissues for one week without significant differences in Foxp3 expression between WT and *Il1rn*^{-/-} cells (Figure S4C,D). However, the ability of *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs to convert conventional T cells into induced regulatory T cells (sometimes termed “infectious tolerance”) was slightly decreased compared to WT Tregs (Figure S4E,F). These findings confirm that the expanded *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs do not represent a known population of pathogenic Tregs or exTregs.

A metabolic program associated with increased suppressive capacity in *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs

To further evaluate the features of *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs, we performed bulk RNAseq of Tregs from WT and *Il1rn*^{-/-} lymph nodes. WT and *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs showed similar expression of multiple genes associated with suppressor function, including *Foxp3*, *Il2ra*, *Il7r*, *Ebi3* (a component of the suppressive cytokine IL-35), and transcription factors including *Eomes*, *Tbx21* (encoding Tbet), and *Irf4* (28). Tregs from WT and *Il1rn*^{-/-} mice showed similar expression of genes encoding molecules involved in Treg localization and trafficking, including CXCR6, CXCR3 and CCR10 (Figure 3A). However, gene set enrichment analysis (GSEA) identified enhanced expression of genes encoding proteins involved in fatty acid metabolism (for example, NTHL1 and GABARAPL1) in *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs and oxidative phosphorylation (OxPhos; for example, ATP5H and NDUF3) in WT Tregs (Figure 3B,C). To test the effect of these expression differences on cell metabolism, WT Foxp3⁺ and *IL-Ra*^{-/-} Foxp3⁺ T cells were cultured in the absence of glucose, glutamine, or lipids, and the extracellular acidification rate (ECAR), a measurement of lactate production, was determined upon re-addition of glucose (Figure 3D). Consistent with GSEA data, *Il1rn*^{-/-} Foxp3⁺ Tregs exhibited less of an increase in ECAR than WT Tregs. Oligomycin was then added to block mitochondrial ATP production and promote maximal rates of glycolysis. *Il1rn*^{-/-} Foxp3⁺ Tregs showed a more robust increase in ECAR following oligomycin treatment than

WT Tregs. These data indicate that WT Tregs perform glycolysis at maximal rates following glucose addition, with limited capacity to increase this pathway, consistent with published findings (29). By contrast, *Il1rn*^{-/-} Foxp3⁺ Tregs exhibited greater glycolytic capacity and reserve than WT Tregs (Figure 3D,E). This finding was consistent with the superiority of *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs with respect to suppression of T cell proliferation, a capacity associated with glycolysis (29).

RANKL⁺ *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs amplify osteoclastogenesis

Protection of bone was the most striking phenotype of early IL-1 β blockade, so we sought a connection between Treg expansion and bone erosion. Previous studies found that exTregs express RANKL, essential for osteoclast differentiation and implicated in erosions associated with inflammatory arthritis (23). RANKL expression has also been documented in Tregs infiltrating breast tumors (30). Intriguingly, expression of RANKL was substantially greater in *Il1rn*^{-/-} than WT Tregs in both lymph node and joint, and increased expression of RANKL by *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs was especially marked in synovial tissue (Figure 4A-F). We examined the osteoclastogenic ability of these cells by culturing WT and *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs sorted from lymph nodes with bone marrow-derived monocyte/macrophage precursor cells (BMM) and enumerating resulting multinucleated tartrate-resistant acid phosphatase (TRAP)-positive osteoclasts. WT Tregs tended to suppress osteoclast formation, consistent with published data (22). By contrast, *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs were potently osteoclastogenic, a capacity effectively abrogated by early in vivo IL-1 β blockade (Figure 4G,H). Co-culture of BMM with sorted *Il1rn*^{-/-} Teff cells or *Il1rn*^{-/-} $\gamma\delta$ T cells did not induce osteoclast formation (Figure S5), highlighting the specificity of osteoclastogenesis by *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs. To test the contribution of RANKL, we sorted CD3⁺Foxp3^{eGFP+}RANKL^{hi} and CD3⁺Foxp3^{eGFP+}RANKL^{lo} cells and cocultured them with BMM. Osteoclastogenesis was restricted to Tregs high in RANKL, as assessed by osteoclast surface area and cell number (Figure 4I,J,K). Of note, prior studies had found that blockade of osteoclast formation was dependent on CTLA-4 (22). To further address this point, we purified T cells from WT or *Il1rn*^{-/-} mice and assessed RANKL and CTLA-4 expression. Interestingly, RANKL^{hi} Tregs exhibited low surface CTLA-4, consistent with a pro-osteoclast formation role. Similar results were obtained with T cells stimulated with anti-CD3/anti-CD28 beads for 48 hours (Figure S6). Together these data show that

Il1rn^{-/-} Tregs overexpress RANKL and acquire an ability to mediate osteoclast development that is absent in their Teff and $\gamma\delta$ T counterparts, suggesting that they have become a previously undescribed population of osteoclastogenic Tregs (O-Tregs) potentially contributory to bone erosion in *Il1rn*^{-/-} arthritis.

IL-1 β drives osteoclastogenic potential in Tregs

We examined whether the O-Treg phenotype represents a direct effect of IL-1 β or an indirect effect mediated by the inflamed arthritic environment. We isolated naïve CD4⁺ cells from Foxp3^{eGFP} animals and cultured them under Treg-polarizing conditions (IL-2 and TGF- β) with or without supplemental IL-1 β to form inducible (i)Tregs. After 5 days of differentiation, we observed comparable development of Foxp3⁺ cells irrespective of supplemental IL-1 β (Figure 5A-C). We then studied the expression of Treg markers in a multidimensional manner by mass cytometry, employing tSNE to visualize resulting cells in two dimensions on the basis of per-cell phenotypic similarity (Figure 5D). At a population level, iTregs differentiated in the presence of IL-1 β showed increased expression of 16 proteins including CD103 (also called ITGAE), RANKL, CD69, and CD39, and a trend toward decreased expression of 5 proteins, including pSTAT3 (Figure 5E). The increase of RANKL was consistent with our *in vivo* findings and suggests that IL-1 β directly confers osteoclastogenic capacity to Tregs. IL-1 β also increased Treg expression of activation markers (CD25, CD39) and markers of suppressive capacity (CD103, CD73, HELIOS) (Figure 5E). We tested the ability of these IL-1 β -conditioned Tregs to induce osteoclast differentiation, finding that they had indeed acquired osteoclastogenic capacity compared with iTregs differentiated without IL-1 β (Figure 5F-H). To confirm that osteoclastogenesis is mediated by RANKL, we compared WT and RANKL-deficient Tregs differentiated with and without IL-1 β . Interestingly, expression of RANKL was strictly required for IL-1 β -driven acquisition of osteoclastogenic capacity (Figure 5I). These findings establish that IL-1 β mediates the differentiation of Tregs into O-Tregs capable of inducing osteoclast formation through expression of RANKL.

IL-1 β -primed Tregs mediate bone erosion *in vivo*

To test whether these observations translate into a pathogenic role *in vivo*, we turned to K/BxN serum transfer arthritis, a model of erosive inflammatory arthritis initiated by

transfer of autoantibody-containing serum from arthritic K/BxN F1 mice (31). We isolated CD4⁺Foxp3⁺ cells from the lymph nodes of WT and *Il1rn*^{-/-} mice and transferred these cells or an equal volume of diluent into BALB/c WT recipient mice one day before K/BxN serum injection. Since K/BxN serum transfer arthritis is independent of T cells, we expected no effect of Treg transfer on arthritis severity, and indeed overall clinical scores and joint swelling were unaffected by Treg transfer (Figure 6A,B). However, bone erosion as assessed by micro-CT was markedly and selectively enhanced by *Il1rn*^{-/-} Foxp3⁺CD4⁺ T cells (Figure 6C,D). WT Foxp3⁺CD4⁺ iTregs differentiated in the presence of IL-1 β exhibited a comparable effect, whereas unconditioned iTregs did not (Figure 6D). These results confirm that IL-1 β reprograms Tregs into O-Tregs that mediate bone injury under arthritic conditions.

IL-1 β induces an osteoclastogenic Treg population in humans

To assess the human relevance of these results, we isolated naïve CD4⁺ cells from peripheral blood of healthy adult donors and cultured them under iTreg polarizing conditions, with or without supplemental IL-1 β . After 5 days of differentiation, cells were co-cultured with peripheral blood CD14⁺ cells isolated from the same donors to compare their ability to induce osteoclasts (Figure 7A,B). iTregs differentiated without IL-1 β suppressed osteoclast formation, consistent with previous reports (20-22). By contrast, iTregs differentiated in the presence of IL-1 β potently induced the development of TRAP⁺ osteoclasts (Figure 7A,B). Thus, IL-1 β induces an O-Treg population in humans as well as in mice.

Finally, we analyzed CD4⁺FOXP3⁺ T cells from 8 RA and 8 osteoarthritis (OA) synovial tissue samples, using mass cytometry data generated by the Accelerating Medicines Partnership RA/SLE Consortium using an established antibody panel (Table S2) (32). tSNE visualization revealed a population of FOXP3⁺ expressing CD4⁺ T with high RANKL expression clustered together in each of the 16 samples (Figure 7C). Notably, density overlay showed an increase of Tregs cells expressing a high level of RANKL in RA synovial tissue samples (Figure 7D). Biaxial gating of data from all 16 synovial samples confirmed high expression of RANKL on ~10% of synovial CD4⁺FOXP3⁺ T cells from RA patients, whereas only ~2% of OA synovial Tregs expressed RANKL (Figure 7E-G). Interestingly, the majority of RA synovial RANKL^{hi}CD4⁺FOXP3⁺ T cells

co-expressed CD38, HLA-DR and/or ICOS (Figure 7C-H), markers of highly suppressive Tregs, although expression of additional markers such as CD127 could not be assessed to further confirm the regulatory status of these cells. Taken together these results show that human RA tissues include a population with features of the pathogenic O-Tregs that contribute to bone erosion in mice.

Discussion

Tregs control the activation and differentiation of conventional CD4⁺ T cells and other innate and adaptive immune lineages through a variety of effector mechanisms (15). Further, Tregs modulate non-immune lineages and serve as agents of tissue homeostasis (33). Here, we identify what we believe to be a new type of stroma-regulating converted regulatory T cell, the *osteoclastogenic Treg* (O-Treg), that is generated through exposure to IL-1 β and contributes to bone erosion in inflammatory arthritis.

Plasticity of Tregs is important for their function. For example, expression of the same chemokine receptors as effector T cells allows Tregs to co-localize with their cellular targets (26, 34-36). Acquisition of the ability to elaborate pro-inflammatory cytokines such as IL-17 and IFN γ may facilitate a rapid pivot from an immunosuppressive to a defensive role, though these cytokines also have immunoregulatory activity (37-39). By contrast, an inflamed environment or aberrant cytokine signaling may drive development of a population of exFoxp3 cells (sometimes called exTregs) that promote rather than limit immune-mediated disease (23, 40-42). The circumstances under which FOXP3-expressing cells deviate from their usual anti-inflammatory role remain incompletely understood (43).

In arthritis, erosive damage to bone is an important determinant of long-term functional outcome (44). Longitudinal studies show that bone erosions occur in more than 60% of RA patients within 2 years of disease onset (45). Although IL-1 blockade has only modest clinical efficacy in RA, treatment attenuates bone erosion; indeed, recombinant IL-1Ra (anakinra) was the first biologic agent shown to protect bone in RA (46, 47). IL-1 blockade is strikingly effective in the highly inflammatory arthritis systemic JIA, often

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abrogating development of chronic joint disease when administered early in the course of illness (48-51). It is therefore important to understand how IL-1 contributes to arthritis, including to bone injury. The present study shows that, in both mice and humans, IL-1 β drives Tregs to express RANKL and thereby accelerate osteoclast differentiation. Adoptive transfer confirms that O-Tregs enhance injury to inflamed joints even without aggravating clinical inflammation, and without defined antigen specificity. We find similar cells in human RA joints. Our data therefore define a population pathogenic converted Tregs distinct from the exF_{oxp3} cells established in other murine contexts (23).

Expression of RANKL by Tregs is not unique to arthritis. Tregs infiltrating breast tumors are the dominant cells expressing RANKL, serving to facilitate metastasis by agonizing RANK on tumor stroma (30). RANKL can be expressed by activated effector T cells, potentially contributing to bone erosion in arthritis and periodontal disease, though at least in antibody-induced murine arthritis fibroblasts remain the key RANKL donor (52-55). The physiological function of Treg RANKL remains unclear. RANK is expressed not only by osteoclasts but also by the medullary thymic epithelial cells (mTEC) responsible for central tolerance, and by lymphoid tissue-inducer (LTi) cells in the lymph nodes; correspondingly, RANK/RANKL signaling is required for normal development of thymic medulla and lymph nodes (56, 57). Intriguingly, Tregs recirculate to the thymus (58), raising the possibility that RANKL-expressing Tregs regulate thymic function, especially since thymic trafficking occurs under control of CCR6 that we find to be expressed by these cells (59). Treg RANKL could participate in tissue homeostasis through ligation of stromal RANK (30, 33, 60). We speculate that RANKL⁺Treg-mediated bone erosion could also be beneficial in some contexts, for example helping to expose or eliminate infected bone in osteomyelitis. Indeed, RANKL-expressing Th17-like exF_{oxp3} cells facilitate removal of diseased teeth, accelerating resolution of periodontal infections (61). The pathogenic contribution of RANKL-expressing osteoclastogenic Tregs to inflammatory arthritis may thus represent the “downside” of an adaptation to more pressing existential requirements.

IL-1 β has multiple roles in lymphocyte function. It promotes the differentiation of naïve CD4⁺ T cells toward the Th17 lineage and enhances antigen-driven expansion and function in CD4 and CD8 T cells (62-66). IL-1 signaling via MyD88 renders Th1 cells

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resistant to suppression by Tregs (67). Tregs themselves can express the IL-1 receptor IL1R1, potentially serving as a “sink” for IL-1, just as they do for IL-2 (26). IL-1 β signaling through IL1R1 attenuates suppressor capacity and promotes expression of IL-17 in Tregs (24, 25, 68, 69). The capacity of IL-1 β to induce the O-Treg phenotype further extends the understanding of this cytokine as a modulator of adaptive immunity.

Together, our data indicate that Tregs driven by IL-1 β acquire a pathogenic capacity during arthritis, accelerating bone injury even in the absence of transdifferentiation to exTregs. A better understanding of the consequences of chronic inflammation on Treg reprogramming will be important to enable the development of safe Treg-mediated therapeutics.

Methods

Mice

Il1rn^{-/-} were produced as described (8). Sex- and age-matched mice, usually at 8-12 weeks of age, were used for each experiment. In some experiments, younger mice (3 weeks old) were used as described in the figure legends. IL-1Ra-deficient *Foxp3*^{eGFP} mice were produced by crossing *Il1rn*^{-/-} mice with BALB/c *Foxp3*^{eGFP} mice (C.Cg-*Foxp3*^{tm2Tch/J}) purchased from The Jackson Laboratory. RANKL deficient Tregs were generated by crossing *Foxp3*-YFP-Cre mice with *RANKL*^{fl/fl} mice. Female mice expressing a yellow fluorescent protein/iCre-recombinase fusion protein from the *Foxp3* locus (*Foxp3*^{YFP/Cre}; JAX strain #016959) were crossed with male mice containing loxP sites flanking *Tnfsf11* (*RANKL*^{fl/fl}; JAX strain #18978). Their female progeny were crossed with *RANKL*^{fl/fl} again to generate *Foxp3*^{YFP/Cre}*RANKL*^{fl/fl} mice lacking RANKL on *Foxp3*-expressing cells. Sex-matched littermate controls that did not express *Foxp3*^{YFP/Cre} were used for comparison.

Isolation of joint-infiltrating cells

Ankle joints were digested with 1 mg/ml collagenase (Sigma) in RPMI 1640 (Sigma) plus 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS) for 30min at 37°C. The cells were filtered through a cell strainer with a 70 µm nylon mesh (Becton Dickinson) and washed with RPMI 1640 plus 10% FBS.

Arthritis scoring, anti-IL-1β treatment and serum transfer

5mg/kg of anti-murine IL-1β or isotype-matched IgG (gift from Novartis, Basel, Switzerland) were injected i.p. 1 time per week for 2 weeks either at the weaning (early treatment) or 14 days after (late treatment). 50 µl of pooled serum from 9- to 11-week-old K/BxN mice were transferred i.p. on day 0 and day 2. Arthritis was graded using a 0 to 12 clinical scale (0 to 3 per paw) as described, as well as by caliper of wrists and ankles (70). Histological assessment of ankles was performed on paraffin-embedded sections stained with H&E. Synovial inflammation, cartilage injury, and bone erosion were graded on a 0 to 3 scale (adapted from (71)).

Flow cytometry

Antibodies were used at a 1:100 dilution unless otherwise mentioned. The following monoclonal antibodies were purchased from Biolegend: anti-mouse CD196-BV605 (also called CCR6) (29-2L17, catalog number 129819), TCR $\gamma\delta$ -FITC (GL3, catalog number 118105), CD254-PE (also called RANKL) (IK22/5, catalog number 510005), CD25-BV650 (PC61, catalog number 102037), CD69-PE/Cy7 (H1.2F3, catalog number 104511), CD3-AF700 (17A2, catalog number 100215), CD4-APC/Cy7 (GK1.5, catalog number 100413), IFN γ -AF647 (XMG1.2, catalog number 505816), IL-17-PerCP/Cy5.5 (TC11-18H10.1, catalog number 506921), GFP-AF488 (FM264G, catalog number 338007), CD39-PE/Cy7 (Duha59, catalog number 143805), FOXP3-AF488 (150-D, catalog number 320011) and ROR γ t-APC (B2D, catalog number 17-6981-82) from Invitrogen. For intracellular Foxp3 and GFP staining, the Foxp3 Staining Buffer Set (eBioscience) was used. For intracellular cytokine staining, cells were stimulated with a cell activation cocktail without Brefeldin A (Biolegend) but with BD GolgiStop (BD Biosciences) overnight. After washing, cells were stained for surface antigens, fixed with for 10 min at room temperature, permeabilized and stained with monoclonal antibodies to cytokine diluted in Perm/Wash Buffer (BD Biosciences). Flow cytometric analysis was performed by Fortessa with Diva software (BD Biosciences) and analyzed with FlowJo.

T cell isolation and sorting

Single-cell suspensions were obtained from peripheral lymph nodes. CD4⁺ cells were isolated using immunomagnetic negative selection (Stemcell technologies), FoxP3^{eGFP+} cells were further subjected to FACS sorting using FACS ArianIII (BD Bioscience). The purity of the sorted cells was >99%. Sorted cells were subsequently subjected to cell culture or adoptive transfer experiments. Adoptive transfer was achieved by a retro-orbital vein injection of 5×10^5 cells on day prior to K/BxN serum transfer. For CellTrace labeling, cells were stained with 5 μ M CellTrace Violet (ThermoFischer) diluted in PBS at 37°C for 20 min.

Treg differentiation in vitro

Single-cell suspensions were obtained from peripheral lymph nodes. Naïve CD4⁺ T cells were isolated using immunomagnetic negative selection (Stemcell technologies). Naïve CD4⁺ T cells were incubated with reagents included in the CellXVivo™ Mouse Treg Cell Differentiation Kit (R&D systems) for 5 days. FoxP3^{eGFP+} cells were further subjected to FACS sorting. Human peripheral blood naïve CD4⁺ T cells were incubated with reagents included in the Human Treg Cell Differentiation Kit (R&D systems) for 5 days.

***In vitro* assay of mouse osteoclast differentiation**

Primary bone marrow cells were suspended in culture medium (α -MEM containing 10% FBS) supplemented with 10 ng/ml macrophage colony-stimulating factor (M-CSF) (R&D Systems) for 2 d to obtain BMMs. After 3 days, non-adherent cells were re-plated at a density of 1×10^4 cells/well in 96 well plates and cultured in medium with 10 ng/ml RANKL (R&D) and 20 ng/ml M-CSF for 5–7 days. For coculture of BMMs and T cells, BMMs (1×10^4 cells per well) were cultured with sorted T cells (1×10^5 cells per well) in the presence of Dynabeads™ Mouse T-Activator CD3/CD28 (ThermoFischer Scientific) for 7 d using a 96-well flat-bottom plate, and TRAP⁺ multinucleated cells (more than three nuclei) were counted and measured.

***In vitro* assay of human osteoclast differentiation**

PBMCs from healthy volunteers were isolated by Ficoll/Hypaque density-gradient centrifugation (GE Healthcare). CD14⁺ cells were isolated using EasySep™ Human CD14⁺ Cell Isolation Kit (Stemcell Technologies). Naïve CD4⁺ T cells were isolated using EasySep™ Human Naïve CD4⁺ T Cell Isolation Kit (Stemcell technologies) and incubated with reagents included in the CellXVivo™ Human Treg Cell Differentiation Kit (R&D Systems) for 5 days. CD14⁺ cells were plated at a density of 1×10^4 cells/well in 96 well plates in α -MEM medium with 10% FBS (Invitrogen) and 50 ng/ml of human M-CSF (R&D systems) for 24hrs. After 24h, in vitro differentiated Tregs were added to the osteoclast precursors (1×10^4 cells/well) 25 ng/ml of M-CSF and 40 ng/ml of RANKL in the presence of Dynabeads™ Human T-Activator CD3/CD28 (ThermoFischer

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Scientific) for 15 d, and TRAP⁺ multinucleated cells (more than three nuclei) were counted and measured.

Micro-computed tomography

After serial fixation in 4% (g/100 mL) paraformaldehyde and 70% (vol/vol) ethanol, knees and ankles were scanned using a μ CT 35 (Scanco Medical AG). Scans were conducted in 70% ethanol using a voxel size of 7 μ m, X-ray tube potential of 55 kVp, intensity of 0.145 Ma, and integration time of 600 ms. The severity of periarticular ankle erosions was determined blindly on the 3D images using a semi-quantitative method. Four sites in the wrist joint were scored: the distal ulnar epiphysis, and the bases of the third, fourth, and fifth metacarpals. Each site received a score of 0–3 as described (72). The maximal score per paw was 12, and the scores were determined by two blinded observers and averaged for a final erosion score. The 3D structures of each knee were assessed using a scoring system from 0 to 3 (0, healthy joint; 1, mild but visible bone destruction at one or more than one site; 2, moderate bone destruction at only one site; 3, moderate bone destruction at more than one site or marked bone destruction at one or more than one site) (73).

Treg suppression assay

CD4⁺Foxp3^{eGFP+} Tregs and CD4⁺Foxp3^{eGFP-} cells were subjected to FACS sorting. Sorted CD4⁺Foxp3^{eGFP-} cells were used as effector cells. The cells were resuspended in RPMI 1640 and labeled with 4 μ M of CellTraceViolet for 10 min at 37°C. Labeling was quenched with complete medium, and the cells were washed twice. Isolated CD4⁺Foxp3^{eGFP+} Tregs were added back at a ratio of 1:1. Stimulation was performed Dynabeads™ Human T-Activator CD3/CD28 (ThermoFischer Scientific) (bead-to-cell ratio 1:1). For proliferation assays, the cell cultures were incubated in complete medium for 3 days.

RNA sequencing

RNA was extracted from sorted cells (5×10^4) using Qiagen RNAeasy micro kit. RNA-seq was performed using the Smart-Seq2 platform (74, 75). Smart-Seq2 libraries were prepared by the Broad Technology Labs and sequenced by the Joint Biology Consortium-associated Broad Genomics Platform. Transcripts were quantified by the

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Broad computational pipeline using Cuffquant version 2.2.1 (76). Genes encoding molecules with known roles in Treg localization and trafficking were selected for focused analysis. Gene set enrichment analysis was performed using GSEA software v3.0 (Broad Institute) with the Molecular Signatures Database (MSigDB) hallmark gene set collection (77, 78).

Metabolic assays

After FACS sorting, Foxp3^{eGFP+} cells (10 x 10⁴ per well) were seeded onto standard Seahorse 24-well plates coated with Cell-Tak (BD Bioscience) and assayed on a Seahorse XFp Analyzer (Agilent Technologies). Plates were centrifuged at 300g for 5 min and kept at 37°C overnight. Oxygen consumption rates (OCR) and extracellular acidification rates (ECAR) were measured in XF media with pH adjusted to 7.4. For examining glycolysis, the Glycolysis Stress Test Kit (Seahorse Bioscience) was used with addition of glucose-free nonbuffered Seahorse medium (pH 7.4), including 10 mmol/L glucose, 2 µmol/L oligomycin, and 50 mmol/L 2-DG.

Human research

Mass cytometry experiments were performed by the AMP RA/SLE Network. Patients with RA fulfilled the ACR 2010 rheumatoid arthritis classification criteria. Rheumatoid factor and anti-CCP antibody status, C-reactive protein level, and medication usage were obtained by review of electronic medical records. Synovial tissue samples for mass were collected from patients with OA or seropositive RA that were undergoing arthroplasty at the Hospital for Special Surgery, New York or at Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston.

Synovial tissue analysis

Synovial samples were acquired from discarded arthroplasty tissue. Synovial tissue was isolated by careful dissection, minced, and digested with 100 µg/ml LiberaseTL and 100 µg/ml DNaseI (both Roche) in RPMI (Life Technologies) for 15 min, inverting every 5 min. Cells were passed through a 70 µm cell strainer, washed, subjected to red blood cell lysis, and cryopreserved in Cryostor CS10 (BioLife Solutions) for batched analyses.

Mass cytometry

Cryopreserved disaggregated synovial cells or PBMCs were thawed into RPMI and 10% FBS (HyClone). Viability was assessed with rhodium for PBMCs and cisplatin (both Fluidigm) for synovial cells. Cells were then washed and stained with primary antibody cocktails at 1:100 dilution. All antibodies were obtained from the Joint Biology Consortium-associated Longwood Medical Area CyTOF Antibody Resource Core (Boston, Massachusetts). Cells were then washed, fixed and permeabilized using the Ebioscience Transcription Factor Fix/Perm Buffer for 45 min, washed in PBS/1% BSA/0.3% saponin, then stained for intracellular markers. Cells were re-fixed in formalin (Sigma), washed with Milli-Q water, and analyzed on Helios (Fluidigm). Mass cytometry data were normalized using EQ Four Element Calibration Beads (Fluidigm). viSNE analyses were performed using the Barnes-Hut SNE implementation on Cytobank (<http://www.cytobank.org>). For synovial tissue mass cytometry data, gated CD4⁺Foxp3⁺ T cells were analyzed using all available protein markers, and each synovial tissue sample was analyzed individually to allow for maximal resolution.

Statistics

Unless otherwise stated, comparisons between 2 conditions employed the 2-tailed Wilcoxon matched pairs test and comparisons between 2 groups of mice over time employed the 2-tailed Mann-Whitney U test. For measurement and scoring of arthritis over time, we used 2-way ANOVA followed by Bonferroni's post-test. Statistical analyses were performed with GraphPad Prism software. A corrected P value of $p < 0.05$ was considered statistically significant.

Study approval

Murine studies were approved by the animal use and care committees of the Dana Farber Cancer Institute and Brigham and Women's Hospital. Research involving human subjects was performed according to the Institutional Review Boards at Partners HealthCare, through approved protocols with appropriate informed consent as required.

Author Contributions

AL conceptualized and performed research, analyzed data, and wrote the manuscript. MHC, JS, NN-M, JY, MM-B, RG-B, AW, PYL, RB, and AM performed research. KW and DAR assisted with human synovial tissue analysis. JAL supervised mass cytometry experiments. YI provided critical reagents. JFC supervised the osteoclast experiments. PAN conceptualized and supervised research, analyzed data, and wrote the manuscript. All authors edited the manuscript and approved the final version.

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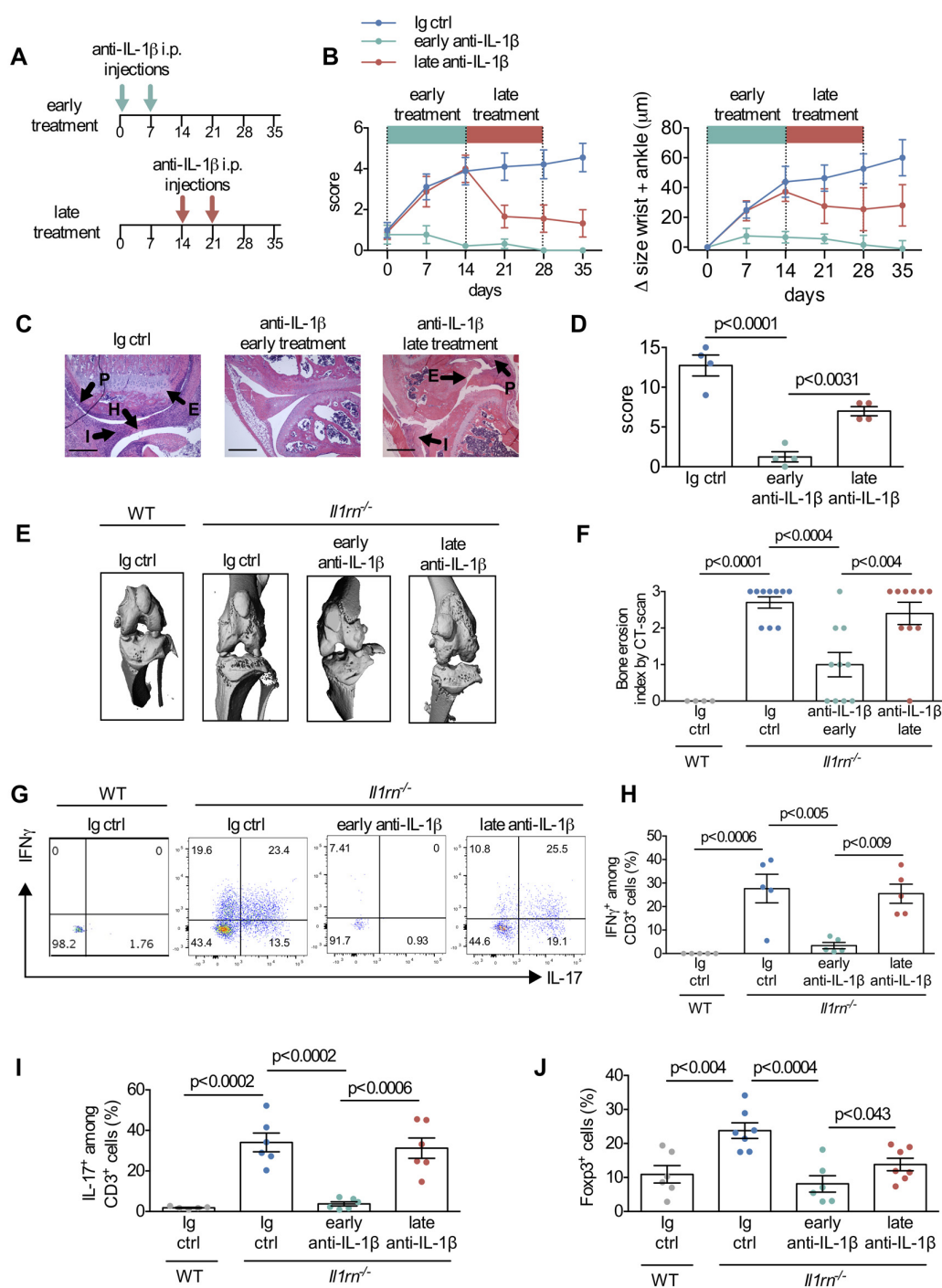


Figure 1: Attenuated bone erosion and Treg accumulation with early IL-1 β blockade. (A-I) $Il1rn^{-/-}$ mice were treated with anti-IL-1 β or isotype-matched IgG (n=6) (5mg/kg i.p. 1 time per week) for 2 weeks either at the weaning (early treatment, n=6) or 14 days after (late treatment n=6). **A**, Experimental scheme detailing administration time of intraperitoneal anti-mIL-1 β . **B**, Arthritis score (0-3/per

paw, 0-12 total) and ankle and wrist thickening measured by caliper were followed for 35 days after arthritis weaning. **C**, H&E staining of representative knee joints. *Il1rn*^{-/-} joints from mice treated with isotype control or late anti-IL-1 β display cellular infiltration (I), synovial hyperplasia (H), pannus formation (P), bone and cartilage erosion (E). Scale bar, 1 μ m. **D**, Histological evaluation of knee joints from *Il1rn*^{-/-} mice treated with anti-IL-1 β (early treatment n=4, late treatment n=4) or isotype-matched IgG (n=4). **E**, High-resolution micro-computed tomography (μ CT) imaging of knees from WT and *Il1rn*^{-/-} mice treated with anti-IL-1 β (n=10 per group) or isotype-matched IgG (n=4). **F**, Bone erosion score by μ CT (0-3 total). **G**, Cytokines expression by CD3⁺Foxp3eGFP⁺ cells from synovial tissue by flow cytometry. **H-I**, Frequency of CD3⁺Foxp3eGFP⁺ cells expressing IFN- γ and IL-17A. **J**, Frequency of Foxp3eGFP⁺ cells among CD3⁺ cells in joint tissue. Data are expressed as mean \pm SEM. (B) Three-way ANOVA, (D,F,G,I) one-way ANOVA.

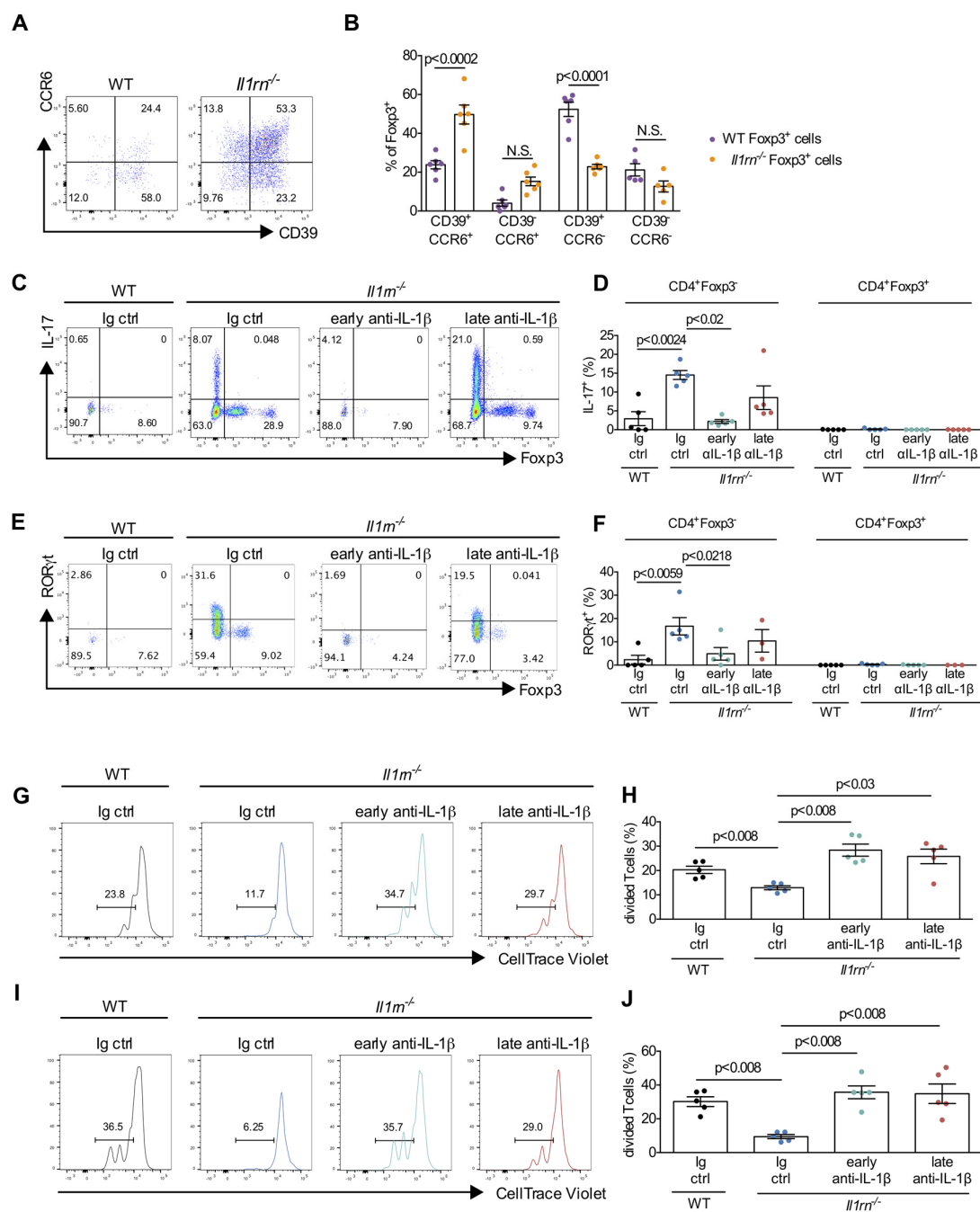


Figure 2: *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs are present and highly suppressive. A, CCR6 and CD39 expression on CD4⁺Foxp3⁺ T cells from WT and *Il1rn*^{-/-} mice synovial tissue by flow cytometry (n=6). **B**, Frequency of CD39 and CCR6 on Foxp3⁺ T cells from synovial tissue. (**C-H**) *Il1rn*^{-/-} mice were treated with anti-IL-1β or isotype-matched IgG (n=5) (5mg/kg i.p. 1 time per week) for 2 weeks either at weaning (early treatment, n=5) or 14 days after (late treatment n=5). **C**, Foxp3 and IL-17 expression by CD4⁺ T cells from synovial tissue harvested 35 days after weaning by flow cytometry (n=5). **D**, Frequency of CD4⁺Foxp3⁻ and CD4⁺Foxp3⁺ cells expressing IL-17 from synovial tissue harvested 35 days after weaning (n=5 per group). **E**, Foxp3 and RORγt expression by CD4⁺ cells

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from synovial tissue by flow cytometry (n=5, late treatment n=3). **F**, Frequency of CD4⁺Foxp3⁻ and CD4⁺Foxp3⁺ cells expressing ROR γ t (n=5 per group, late treatment n=3). (**G,H**) Foxp3⁺ cells from WT mice or *Il1rn*^{-/-} mice treated with anti-IL-1 β or isotype-matched IgG were cocultured with WT Foxp3⁻ cells (n=5 per group). **G**, Proliferation of CD3⁺Foxp3⁻ cells following 72 h of coculture. **H**, Percentage of divided WT CD3⁺Foxp3⁻ cells. (**I,J**) Foxp3⁺ cells from WT mice or *Il1rn*^{-/-} mice treated with anti-IL-1 β or isotype-matched IgG were cocultured with Foxp3^{eGFP}⁻ cells from a donor of the same strain (n=5 per group). **i**, Foxp3⁻ cells proliferation following 72 h of coculture. **j**, Percentage of divided WT Foxp3⁻ cells. Data are expressed as mean +/- SEM. (B,D,F,H) One-way ANOVA.

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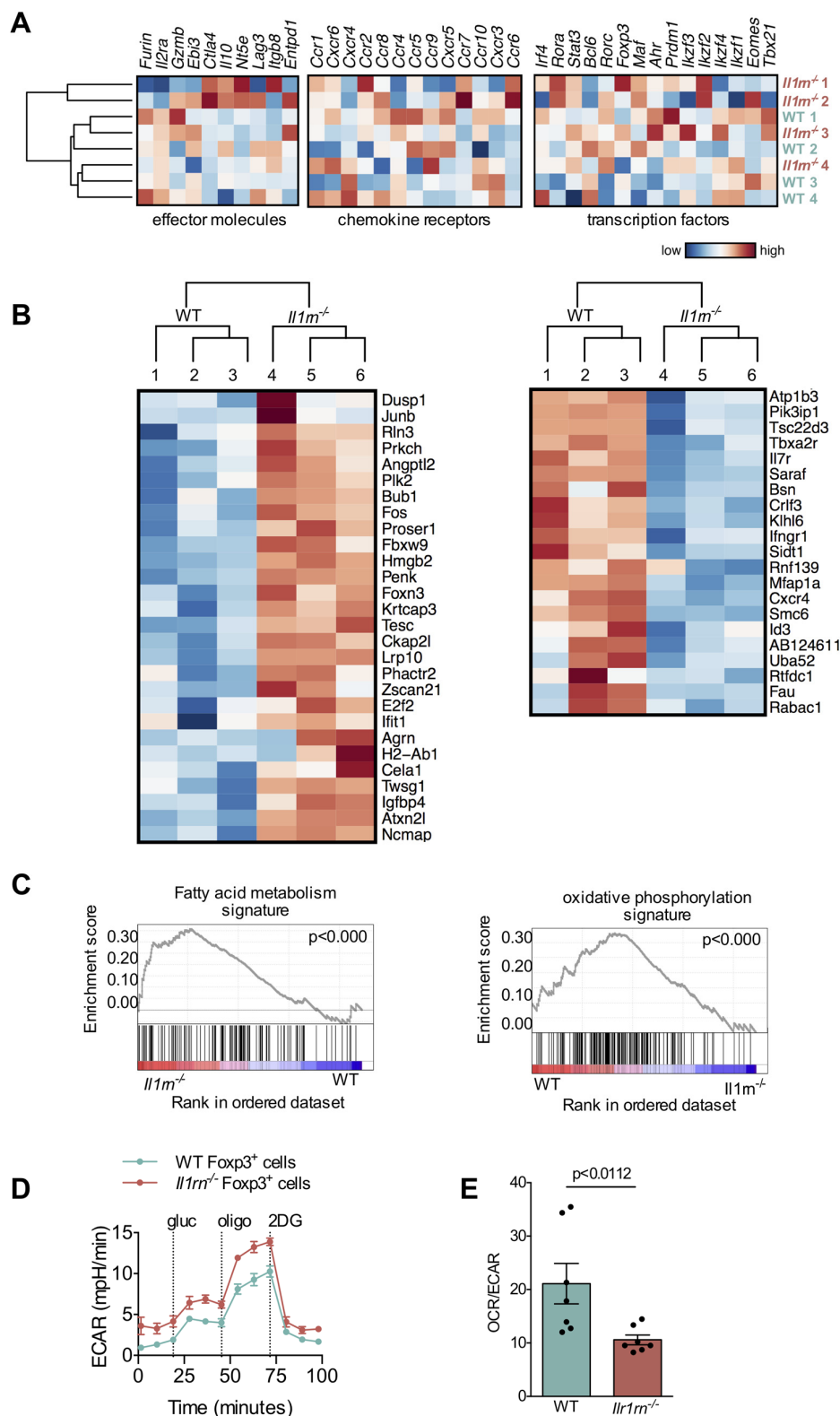


Figure 3: *Il1rn^{-/-}* Tregs exhibit increases glycolysis. (A,C) CD4⁺Foxp3^{eGFP+} Treg cells from WT and *Il1rn^{-/-}* mice were sorted and RNA-seq transcriptomes were analyzed. **A**, Systematic analysis of transcripts encoding the major functional molecules involved in Treg inhibitory function. Comparison is shown of normalized

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expression values of effector molecules, chemokine receptors and transcription factors. **B**, Heatmap of top 50 differentially expressed genes between CD4⁺Foxp3^{eGFP+} cells sorted from lymph nodes of 3 WT and 3 IL-1Ra^{-/-}Foxp3^{eGFP} animals. **C**, Overexpression of fatty acid metabolism genes in *Il1rn*^{-/-} vs. WT **c**, Over-expression of oxphos genes in WT vs. *Il1rn*^{-/-} Tregs. **(D,E)**, 1x10⁵ WT (n=6) and 1x10⁵ *Il1rn*^{-/-} (n=6) lymph node CD4⁺Foxp3⁺ Tregs were equilibrated for 1 h in unbuffered XF assay medium supplemented with 1 mM sodium pyruvate in a XF24 cell culture microplate. Extracellular acidification rate (ECAR) and oxygen consumption rate (OCR) were measured using an XF24 analyzer (Seahorse Bioscience). Compounds were injected during the assay at the following final concentrations in this “glycolysis stress” assay: 10 μM glucose, 1 μM oligomycin and 50 μM 2-DG. **D**, Extracellular acidification rate (ECAR) (n=12). **E**, Basal OCR/ECAR ratio (n=7). Data are expressed as mean +/- SEM. (D,E) Three-way ANOVA.

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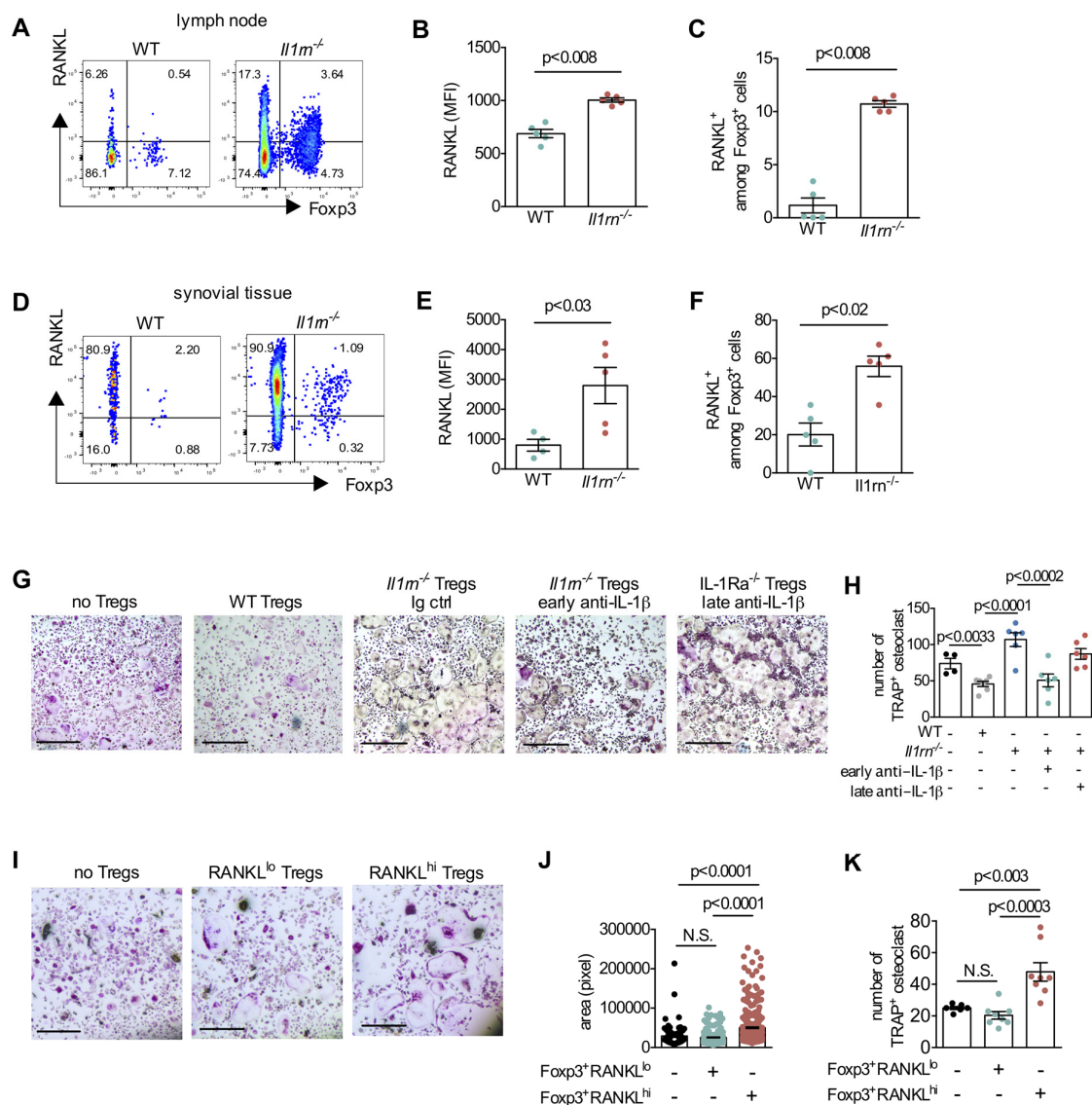


Figure 4: *In vivo* anti-IL-1 β treatment decreases *Il1rn*^{-/-} Treg osteoclastogenic potential and bone erosion. (A-C) RANKL expression on Foxp3^{eGFP+} T cells from lymph node by flow cytometry (n=5 per group). **(D-F)** RANKL expression on Foxp3^{eGFP+} T cells from synovial tissue by flow cytometry (n=5 per group). **(G,H)** Sorted Tregs from WT (n=4) and *Il1rn*^{-/-} treated anti-IL-1 β (n=5 per group) or Ig control (n=7) were co-cultured with macrophage precursor cells, after 5 days of co-culture, cells were stained with tartrate-resistant acid phosphatase (TRAP) and TRAP⁺ multinucleated cells were counted. Scale bar, 1mm. **H**, Number of TRAP⁺ osteoclasts. **(I-K)** Sorted RANKL^{hi} and RANKL^{lo} Foxp3^{eGFP+} Tregs from *Il1rn*^{-/-} mice were co-culture with macrophage precursor cells; after 5 days of co-culture, TRAP⁺ multinucleated cells were measured and counted (n=8 per group). Scale bar, 1mm. Data are expressed as mean SEM. (B,D) Mann and Whitney *t* test, (F,H) One-way ANOVA.

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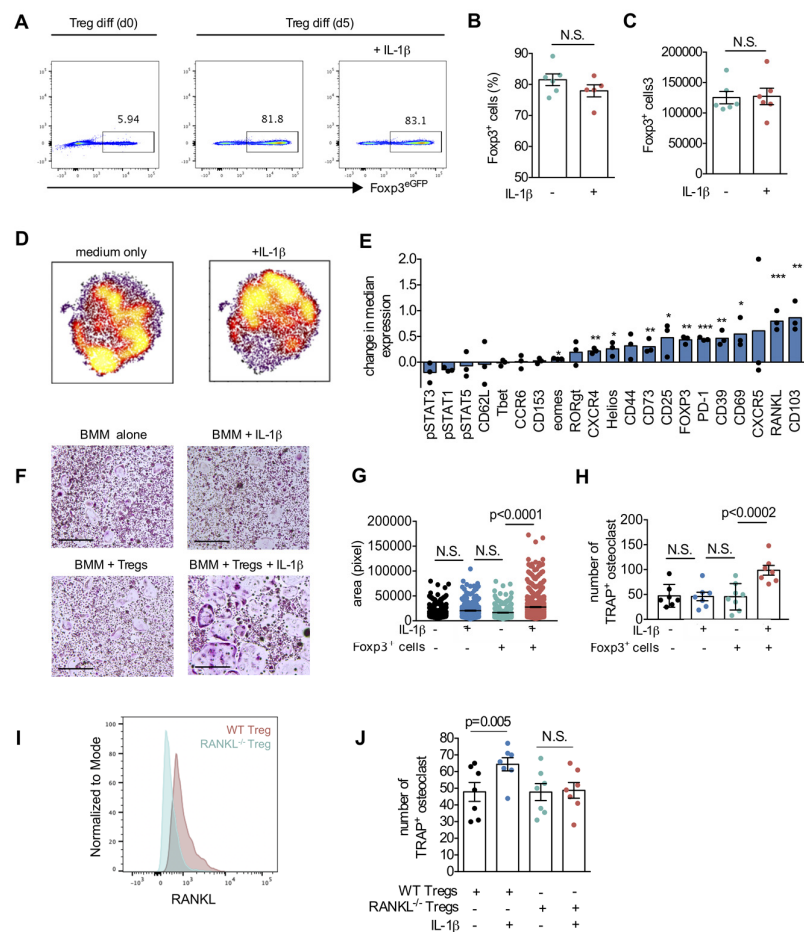


Figure 5: IL-1 β confers osteoclastogenic potential to Tregs. CD4⁺ naïve cells from WT mice were isolated and cultured in Treg differentiation media with or without IL-1 β (n=6 per group). (**A,B,C**) Foxp3^{eGFP} expression by flow cytometry after 5 days of Tregs differentiation with or without IL-1 β (**D,E**). iTregs were sorted based on Foxp3^{eGFP}⁺ expression and co-cultured with bone marrow cells in presence of M-CSF (20ng/mL) and RANKL (20ng/mL) (n=3 per group). (**D,E**) High-dimensional analyses of sorted Foxp3^{eGFP}⁺ iTregs differentiated with or without IL-1 β by mass cytometry. **D**, viSNE plots of iTregs differentiated with or without IL-1 β . **E**, Difference in protein expression between iTregs differentiated with or without IL-1 β . (**F-H**), Sorted Foxp3^{eGFP}⁺ iTreg cells differentiated with or without IL-1 β were co-cultured with WT macrophage precursor cells. After 7 days of co-culture, cells were stained with tartrate-resistant acid phosphatase (TRAP) and TRAP⁺ osteoclasts were measured and counted. Scale bar, 1mm. (**I-J**) RANKL deficient Tregs were generated by crossing FoxP3-YFP-Cre mice with RANKL^{fl/fl} mice. Littermate mice that do not express FoxP3-YFP-Cre were utilized as WT controls. (**I**) Histogram depicting RANKL expression on WT and RANKL^{-/-} Tregs. (**J**) Osteoclastogenic activity of WT and RANKL^{-/-} Tregs differentiated in the presence or absence of IL-1b. Data are expressed as mean SEM. (B,C) Mann and Whitney *t* test, (F) * *P* < 0.01, ** *P* < 0.001, *** *P* < 0.0001. by Unpaired *t* test, (G,H,I) One-way ANOVA.

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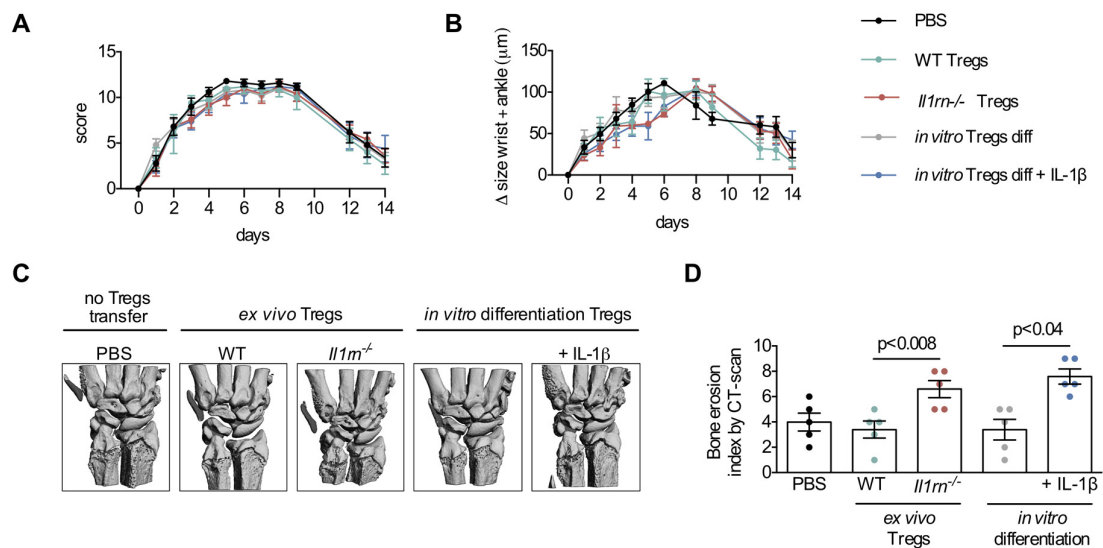


Figure 6: IL-1 β reprogrammed Tregs contribute directly to bone injury under arthritic conditions. (A,D) Balb/c WT mice were injected with 75 μ l i.p. K/BxN serum on days 0 and 2. Sorted CD4⁺Foxp3^{eGFP+} cells from the lymph nodes of WT (n=5) or *Il1rn^{-/-}* (n=5) mice or FOXP3^{egfp+} iTreg cells differentiated with or without IL-1 β (n=5) (or an equal volume of PBS n=5) were transferred into Balb/c WT recipient mice one day before K/BxN serum injection. **A**, Arthritis score (0-3/per paw, 0-12 total) and **B**, ankle and wrist thickening measured by caliper was followed for 14 days after K/BxN injection. **C**, High-resolution micro-computed tomography (μ CT) imaging of wrist from Balb/c WT recipient mice 14 days after K/BxN injection. **D**, Bone erosion score (0-3 total). Data are expressed as mean SEM. (A,B) One way ANOVA. (D) Mann and Whitney *t* test.

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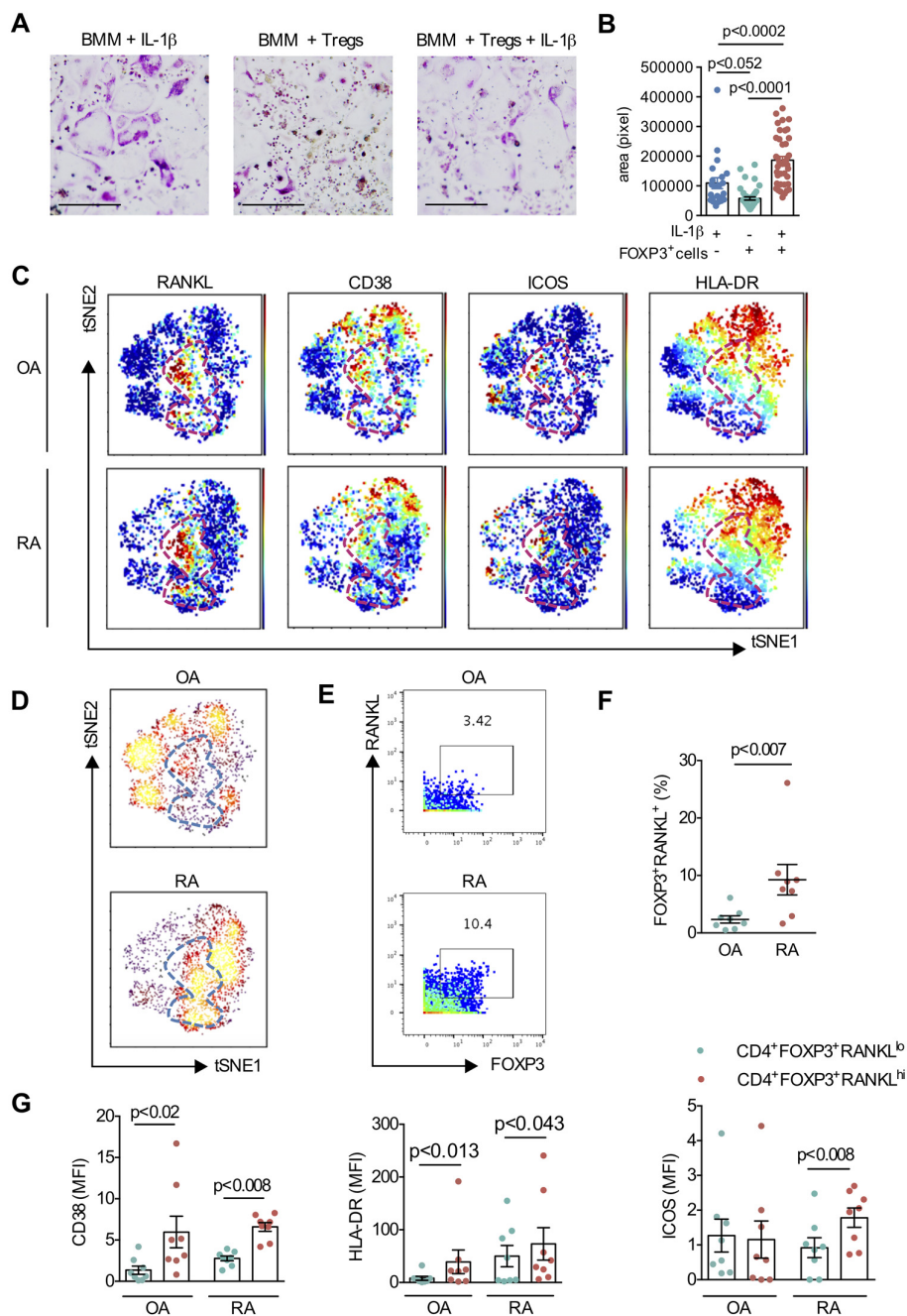


Figure 7: IL-1 β induces an osteoclastogenic Treg population in humans. (A,B) Naïve CD4⁺ cells from peripheral blood of healthy adult donors and cultured them under iTreg polarizing conditions, with or without supplemental IL-1 β . After 5 days of differentiation, cells were co-cultured with peripheral blood CD14⁺ cells isolated from the same donors. After 15 days of co-culture, cells were stained with tartrate-resistant acid phosphatase (TRAP) and TRAP⁺ osteoclasts were measured. Scale bar, 1mm. **C**, viSNE plots of synovial CD4⁺FOXP3⁺ T cells from 8 patients with OA and 8 patients with RA. Circle indicates RANKL^{hi} cells. **D**, viSNE map colored by density. (**E,F**) CD4⁺FOXP3⁺RANKL^{hi} T-cell frequencies in synovial tissue from RA patients (n= 8) and OA patients (n=8). **G**, Expression of indicated proteins by mass cytometry of CD4⁺FOXP3⁺RANKL^{lo} populations and CD4⁺FOXP3⁺RANKL^{hi} cells from 8 patients

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with OA and 8 patients with RA. Data are expressed as mean SEM. (B) Three-way ANOVA. (F) Mann and Whitney *t* test. (G) One-way ANOVA.