

Université de Montréal

**Étude du rôle de la conformation des glycoprotéines de l'enveloppe  
du VIH-1 dans la réponse cytotoxique cellulaire dépendante des  
anticorps**

par  
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Cette thèse intitulée :

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réponse cytotoxique cellulaire dépendante des anticorps**

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## RÉSUMÉ

En l'absence d'un vaccin efficace et avec des thérapies antirétrovirales incapables d'éradiquer le virus, le VIH-1 reste un problème de santé publique mondial. Des immunothérapies à base d'anticorps sont à l'étude pour éliminer les réservoirs cellulaires, qui représentent un obstacle incontournable à la guérison du VIH-1. Les glycoprotéines d'enveloppe du VIH-1 (Env) représentent le seul antigène du virus exposé à la surface des cellules infectées et constituent donc la principale cible des anticorps. L'Env non-liée adopte sa conformation « fermée », reconnue préférentiellement par les anticorps neutralisants. L'interaction avec CD4 fait passer Env dans sa conformation « ouverte », exposant des épitopes conservés reconnus par les anticorps non-neutralisants (nnAbs) présents dans le sérum d'individus infectés par le VIH-1 (sérum VIH+). Les nnAbs peuvent éliminer les cellules infectées par la cytotoxicité cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCC). Cependant, les protéines accessoires Nef et Vpu diminuent l'expression de surface de CD4 et BST-2 afin d'évader à la reconnaissance et l'élimination des cellules infectées par les nnAbs. Dans cette thèse, nous caractérisons en détail la contribution d'Env, Nef et Vpu pour échapper aux réponses humorales et explorons de nouvelles stratégies pour sensibiliser les cellules infectées à l'ADCC.

Pour quantifier plus adéquatement la réponse ADCC, nous avons identifié des biais dans les tests largement utilisés, notamment pour évaluer les corrélats de protection vaccinale. Il s'agit de l'incapacité à faire la distinction entre l'élimination des cellules infectées et des cellules non-infectées, et l'utilisation de constructions virales comportant un gène rapporteur empêchant l'expression de Nef. En utilisant un nouveau marquage intracellulaire, nous avons confirmé l'effet protecteur de Nef et Vpu contre l'ADCC.

Ensuite, nous avons étudié les déterminants d'Env et Vpu modulant la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à l'ADCC médiée par les nnAbs. Certaines caractéristiques structurales d'Env modulent ses transitions conformationnelles, incluant le domaine d'association du trimère, le site de clivage de la furine et la cavité Phe43. L'altération de ces composantes augmente la sensibilité des cellules infectées à l'ADCC par les sérum VIH+. Outre l'inhibition de CD4 et BST-2, Vpu cible également NTB-A et PVR, des ligands de récepteurs activateurs des cellules NK. Cependant, la polyfonctionnalité de Vpu est compromise par l'augmentation de BST-2 par les interférons de type I (IFN-I), sensibilisant ainsi les cellules infectées aux réponses NK. En utilisant un modèle de

souris humanisée, nous validons l'importance de Vpu pour échapper à la pression immunitaire des nnAbs *in vivo*.

Enfin, nous avons exploré de nouvelles stratégies pour sensibiliser les cellules infectées à l'ADCC en modulant la conformation d'Env avec des mimétiques moléculaires de CD4 (CD4mc). Nous avons identifié des résidus bordant la cavité Phe43 modulant la sensibilité au CD4mc. L'accumulation d'Env induite par les IFN-I augmente la capacité du CD4mc à sensibiliser les cellules infectées à l'ADCC par les sérums VIH+.

Globalement, cette thèse dévoile une caractérisation approfondie des déterminants viraux et cellulaires modulant la susceptibilité des cellules infectées par le VIH-1 aux réponses humorales. Une meilleure compréhension de ces mécanismes est nécessaire pour développer des nouvelles stratégies capables d'éradiquer les réservoirs viraux.

**Mots-clés:** VIH-1, ADCC, Env, glycoprotéine, Vpu, Nef, CD4, BST-2, anticorps, cellules NK

## ABSTRACT

In the absence of an effective vaccine and with antiretroviral therapies unable to eradicate the virus, HIV-1 remains a global public health problem. Antibody-based immunotherapies are currently being investigated to eliminate cellular reservoirs, which represent a major obstacle towards an HIV-1 cure. HIV-1 envelope glycoproteins (Env) represent the only virus-specific antigen exposed at the surface of infected cells and therefore is the main target for antibodies. In its unliganded form, Env samples a ‘closed’ conformation, preferentially recognized by neutralizing antibodies. Interaction with CD4 drives Env into its ‘open’ conformation, exposing conserved epitopes recognized by non-neutralizing antibodies (nnAbs) present in sera from HIV-1 infected individuals (HIV+ sera). NnAbs can eliminate infected cells by antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC). However, HIV-1 encodes for the accessory proteins Nef and Vpu which decrease cell surface levels of CD4 and BST-2, thus avoiding recognition and elimination of infected cells by nnAbs. In this thesis, we characterize in detail the contribution of Env, Nef, and Vpu to evade humoral responses and explore new strategies for sensitizing infected cells to ADCC.

In an effort to develop a more adequate quantification of ADCC responses, we identified major biases in widely used assays, including the ones used to assess correlates of vaccine protection. These include the inability to distinguish between the elimination of infected and uninfected cells and the use of viral constructs coding for a reporter gene that prevents Nef expression. Using a novel intracellular staining, we confirmed the protective effect of Nef and Vpu against ADCC responses.

Next, we studied the different Env and Vpu determinants modulating the susceptibility of infected cells to nnAbs-mediated ADCC responses. Certain Env structural features modulate its conformational transitions, including the trimer association domain, the furin cleavage site and the Phe43 cavity. Alterations of these components increase the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC mediated by HIV+ sera. In addition to inhibiting CD4 and BST-2, Vpu also targets NTB-A and PVR, which act as ligands for NK cell activating receptors. However, we found that the polyfunctionality of Vpu can be compromised by the upregulation of BST-2 by type I interferons (IFN-I), thereby sensitizing infected cells to NK cell responses. Using a humanized mouse model, we validate the importance of Vpu to escape the immune pressure of nnAbs *in vivo*.

Finally, we explored new strategies to bypass the protective effect of Vpu and Nef and sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC by modulating Env conformation using small CD4-mimetic compounds (CD4mc). We identified a network of residue lining the Phe43 cavity that modulates Env sensitivity to CD4mc. The enhanced surface expression of Env by type I IFNs boosts the ability of CD4mc to sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC by HIV+ sera.

Overall, this thesis sheds light on a thorough characterization of viral and cellular determinants modulating the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to humoral responses. A better understanding of these mechanisms is needed to develop new strategies able to eradicate viral reservoirs.

**Keywords:** HIV-1, ADCC, Env, glycoprotein, Vpu, Nef, CD4, BST-2, antibody, NK cells



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## LISTE DES ABRÉVIATIONS

6HB	<u>6-Helix Bundle</u>
Ad26	Adénovirus de sérotype 26
ADCC	Cytotoxicité cellulaire dépendante des anticorps ( <u>antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity</u> )
ADCML	Lyse par le complément dépendante des anticorps ( <u>antibody-dependent complement-mediated lysis</u> )
ADCP	Phagocytose dépendante des anticorps ( <u>antibody-dependant cellular phagocytosis</u> )
ADN	<u>Acide désoxyribonucléique</u>
ADNdb	<u>ADN double brin</u>
ALIX	<u>ALG-2-interacting protein X</u>
ALLINI	Inhibiteur allostérique de l'intégrase ( <u>Allosteric integrase inhibitor</u> )
ALVAC	Virus canarypox vivant atténué ( <u>Attenuated live vaccinia</u> )
aNAb	Anticorps neutralisant autologue
AP1	Protéine activatrice 1 ( <u>Activator protein 1</u> )
AP-1	Complexe de protéines adaptatrices de la clathrine 1 ( <u>Adaptor Protein 1</u> )
AP-2	Complexe de protéines adaptatrices de la clathrine 2 ( <u>Adaptor Protein 2</u> )
APOBEC3	<u>Apolipoprotein B mRNA-editing enzyme catalytic polypeptide-like 3</u>
ARN	<u>Acide ribonucléique</u>
ARNm	<u>ARN messenger</u>
ARNPII	<u>ARN polymérase II</u>
ARNsb	<u>ARN simple brin</u>
ARNv	<u>ARN viral</u>
ARNt(Lys3)	ARN de transfert 3 pour la lysine
ART	Thérapie antirétrovirale ( <u>Antiretroviral therapy</u> )
ARV	<u>Antirétroviraux</u>
ATR	<u>Ataxia telangiectasia-mutated and Rad3-related protein</u>
AZT	<u>Azidothymidine</u>
BCL-2	<u>B cell lymphoma-2</u>
BICD2	<u>Bicaudal D2</u>

bNAb	Anticorps neutralisant à large spectre ( <i>Broadly neutralizing antibody</i> )
β-TrCP	<i>Beta-transducin repeat containing protein</i>
CA	<i>Capside virale</i>
CARD8	<i>Caspase recruitment domain family member 8</i>
Cas9	<i>CRISPR associated protein 9</i>
CBFβ	<i>Core-binding factor subunit beta</i>
CCDC137	<i>Coiled-coil domain containing 137</i>
CCL	Chimiokine C-C ( <i>C-C chemokine ligand</i> )
CCR	Récepteur de chimiokine C-C ( <i>C-C chemokine receptor</i> )
CD	<i>Cluster de différenciation</i>
CD3ζ	Chaîne zeta du TCR
CD4BS	Site de liaison à CD4 ( <i>CD4 binding site</i> )
CD4i	Induits par CD4 ( <i>CD4-induced</i> )
CD4mc	Mimétique moléculaire de CD4 ( <i>CD4 mimetic compound</i> )
CD62L	L-sélectine
CDC	<i>Center for Disease Control and Prevention</i>
CDK	Protéine kinase dépendante de la cycline ( <i>Cyclin-dependent kinase</i> )
CDR	<i>Complementarity Determining Regions</i>
CDS	Senseur d'ADN cytosolique ( <i>Cytosolic DNA sensor</i> )
cGAS	<i>cyclic GMP-AMP synthase</i>
CHAMP	<i>Control of HIV after Antiretroviral Medication Pause</i>
CKII	<i>Casein kinase II</i>
CLR	Lectine de type C ( <i>C-type lectin receptor</i> )
CMH-I	Complexe majeur d'histocompatibilité de classe I
CMH-II	Complexe majeur d'histocompatibilité de classe II
CMV	<i>Cytomégalo<span>u</span>virus</i>
COPI	<i>Coatomer protein complex I</i>
CoRBS	Site de liaison au corécepteur ( <i>Coreceptor binding site</i> )
COVID-19	<i>Coronavirus Disease 2019</i>
CpG	<i>Cytosine-phosphate-guanine</i>
CPSF6	<i>Cleavage and polyadenylation specific factor 6</i>

CRF	Forme recombinante en circulation ( <i>circulating recombinant form</i> )
CRISPR	<i>Clustered Regularly Interspaced Short Palindromic Repeats</i>
CRM1	<i>Chromosome maintenance gene 1</i>
CST7	<i>Cystatin-7</i>
CT	Queue cytoplasmique ( <i>Cytoplasmic tail</i> )
CTL	Lymphocyte T cytotoxique ( <i>Cytotoxic T lymphocyte</i> )
CTLA-4	<i>Cytotoxic T-lymphocyte-associated protein 4</i>
CUL	<i>Cullin</i>
CXCR	Récepteur de chimiokine C-X-C ( <i>C-X-C chemokine receptor</i> )
CypA	<i>Cyclophiline A</i>
CycT1	<i>Cycline T1</i>
DAP	<i>DNAX-activating protein</i>
DART	<i>Dual-affinity re-targeting molecule</i>
DCAF1	<i>DDB1 and CUL4 associated factor 1</i>
DDB1	<i>DNA damage-binding protein 1</i>
DC-SIGN	<i>Dendritic cell-specific intercellular adhesion molecular-3-grabbing non-integrin</i>
DNAM-1	<i>DNAX accessory molecule 1</i>
dNTP	Désoxyribonucléotide triphosphate
ELISA	<i>Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay</i>
ELOB	<i>Elongin B</i>
ELOC	<i>Elongin C</i>
Env	Glycoprotéines d'enveloppe virale
ERAD	Système de dégradation de protéines associé au réticulum endoplasmique ( <i>ER-associated protein degradation</i> )
ESCRT	<i>Endosomal Sorting Complex Required for Transport</i>
EXO1	<i>Exonucléase 1</i>
Fab	Fragment liant l'antigène ( <i>Fragment antigen-binding</i> )
Fc	Fragment cristallisable
FcεRIγ	Chaîne γ du récepteur Fc des immunoglobulines E
FcR	Récepteur Fc
FcγR	Récepteur Fc des immunoglobulines G

FDR	<u>F</u> acteur de <u>r</u> estri <u>c</u> tion
FEZ1	<u>F</u> asciculation and <u>e</u> longation protein <u>z</u> eta <u>1</u>
FSS	Signal de changement de cadre de lecture ( <u>F</u> rames <u>h</u> ifting <u>s</u> ignal)
Fv	Fragment variable
Gag	<u>G</u> roup- <u>S</u> pecific <u>A</u> ntigen
GALT	<u>G</u> ut- <u>a</u> sso <u>c</u> iated <u>l</u> ymphoid <u>t</u> issue
GBP5	<u>G</u> uanylate <u>b</u> inding protein <u>5</u>
GM-CSF	<u>G</u> ranulocyte- <u>m</u> acrophage <u>c</u> olony- <u>s</u> timulating <u>f</u> actor
GPI	<u>G</u> lycosylphosphatidilinositol
gp41	<u>G</u> lycoprotéine d'enveloppe de <u>41</u> KDa
gp120	<u>G</u> lycoprotéine d'enveloppe de <u>120</u> KDa
gp140	<u>G</u> lycoprotéine d'enveloppe de <u>140</u> KDa dont le site clivage de la furine, le domaine transmembranaire et la queue cytoplasmique ont été enlevés
gp160	<u>G</u> lycoprotéine d'enveloppe de <u>160</u> KDa
GTP	<u>G</u> uanosine <u>t</u> riphosphate
GvHD	Réaction du greffon contre l'hôte
H3K36me3	<u>H</u> istone <u>3</u> <u>L</u> ysine <u>36</u> triméthylée
HARSAH	<u>H</u> ommes <u>a</u> yant des <u>r</u> elations <u>s</u> exuelles <u>a</u> vec des <u>h</u> ommes
HDAC	<u>H</u> istone <u>d</u> ésacétylase
HLA	<u>H</u> uman <u>L</u> eukocyte <u>A</u> ntigen
HLTF	<u>H</u> elicase <u>l</u> ike <u>t</u> ranscription <u>f</u> actor
HR1	<u>H</u> elical <u>h</u> eptad <u>r</u> epeat <u>1</u>
HR2	<u>H</u> elical <u>h</u> eptad <u>r</u> epeat <u>2</u>
HSPG	<u>H</u> eparan <u>s</u> ulfate <u>p</u> roteoglycan
HTLV-III	Virus T-lymphotropique humain de type III ( <u>H</u> uman <u>T</u> -lymphotropic <u>v</u> irus <u>III</u> )
HVTN	<u>H</u> IV <u>V</u> accine <u>T</u> rials <u>N</u> etwork
IAVI	<u>I</u> nternational <u>A</u> IDS <u>V</u> accine <u>I</u> nitiative
ICAM	<u>I</u> ntercellular <u>a</u> dhesion <u>m</u> olecule
IFI16	<u>I</u> nterferon <u>g</u> amma <u>i</u> nducible protein <u>16</u>
IFITM	<u>I</u> nterferon- <u>i</u> nduced <u>t</u> ransmembrane protein
IFNAR	<u>R</u> écepteur de l' <u>i</u> nterféron- <u>α</u> / <u>β</u>

IFN-I	<u>I</u> nter <u>f</u> éron de type <u>I</u>
Ig	<u>I</u> mmunoglobuline
IκB	<i><u>I</u>nhibitor of nuclear factor <u>κ</u> <u>B</u></i>
IL	<u>I</u> nter <u>l</u> eukine
IMC	Clone moléculaire infectieux ( <i><u>I</u>nfectious <u>m</u>olecular <u>c</u>lone</i> )
IN	<u>I</u> ntégrase
INSTI	Inhibiteur du transfert de brin par l'intégrase ( <i><u>I</u>ntegrase <u>s</u>trand <u>t</u>ransfer <u>i</u>nhibitor</i> )
IP <sub>6</sub>	<u>I</u> nositol <u>h</u> exaphosphate
ISG	Gène induit par l'interféron ( <i><u>I</u>nterferon-<u>s</u>timulated <u>g</u>ene</i> )
ITAM	<i><u>I</u>mmunoreceptor tyrosine-based <u>a</u>ctivation <u>m</u>otif</i>
ITIM	<i><u>I</u>mmunoreceptor tyrosine-based <u>i</u>nhibitory <u>m</u>otif</i>
ITSS	<u>I</u> nfection <u>t</u> ransmissible <u>s</u> exuellement ou par le <u>s</u> ang
JAK	<i><u>J</u>anus <u>k</u>inase</i>
LAG3	<i><u>L</u>ymphocyte-<u>a</u>ctivation <u>g</u>ene <u>3</u></i>
LAV	Virus associé aux lymphadénopathies ( <i><u>L</u>ymphadenopathy <u>a</u>ssociated <u>v</u>irus</i> )
LEDGF	<i><u>L</u>ens <u>e</u>pithelium-<u>d</u>erived <u>g</u>rowth <u>f</u>actor</i>
LFA-1	<i><u>L</u>ymphocyte <u>f</u>unction-associated <u>a</u>ntigen <u>1</u></i>
LLP	Peptide lytique lentiviral ( <i><u>L</u>entiviral <u>l</u>ytic <u>p</u>eptide</i> )
LP-98	Lipopeptide 98
LPS	<u>L</u> ipopolysacharride
LPA	Agent promouvant la latence ( <i><u>L</u>atency-<u>P</u>romoting <u>A</u>gents</i> )
LRA	Agent réactivateur de la latence ( <i><u>L</u>atency-<u>R</u>eversing <u>A</u>gent</i> )
L-SIGN	<i>liver/lymph node-specific <u>I</u>CAM-3 grabbing non-integrin</i>
LTNP	<i><u>L</u>ong <u>t</u>erm <u>n</u>on-<u>p</u>rogressors</i>
LTR	<i><u>L</u>ong <u>T</u>erminal <u>R</u>epeat</i>
MA	<u>M</u> atrice
MAC	Complexe d'attaque membranaire ( <i><u>M</u>embrane <u>a</u>ttack <u>c</u>omplex</i> )
mAb	Anticorps monoclonal ( <i><u>m</u>onoclonal <u>a</u>ntibody</i> )
M-CSF	<i><u>M</u>acrophage <u>c</u>olony-<u>s</u>timulating <u>f</u>actor</i>
MDA5	<i><u>M</u>elanoma <u>d</u>ifferentiation-associated protein <u>5</u></i>
MICA	<i><u>M</u>HC class <u>I</u> <u>c</u>hain-related molecule <u>A</u></i>

MIP	Protéine inflammatoire des macrophages ( <i>Macrophage Inflammatory Protein</i> )
mL	millilitre
μL	microlitre
MPER	<i>Membrane-proximal external region</i>
MT	<i>Microtubule</i>
MVA	<i>Modified Vaccinia Virus Ankara</i>
MX2	<i>Myxovirus resistance protein 2</i>
NAb	Anticorps neutralisant
NC	<i>Nucléocapside</i>
Nef	<i>Negative factor</i>
NES	Signal d'export nucléaire ( <i>Nuclear export signal</i> )
NFAT	<i>Nuclear factor of activated T cells</i>
NF-κB	<i>Nuclear factor-kappa B</i>
NHP	primate non-humain ( <i>Non-human primate</i> )
NK	<i>Natural Killer</i>
NKT	<i>Natural Killer T</i>
NKG2D	<i>Natural Killer Group 2D</i>
NLR	Récepteur de type NOD ( <i>NOD-like receptor</i> )
NLRP3	<i>NLR family pyrin domain containing protein 3</i>
NLS	Signal de localisation nucléaire ( <i>Nuclear localisation signal</i> )
NRTI	Inhibiteur nucléosidique de la transcriptase inverse ( <i>Nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor</i> )
NNRTI	Inhibiteur non nucléosidique de la transcriptase inverse ( <i>Non-nucleoside reverse transcriptase inhibitor</i> )
NPC	Complexe de pore nucléaire ( <i>Nuclear pore complex</i> )
NPL4	<i>Nuclear protein localization protein 4</i>
NTB-A	<i>NK-T-B antigen</i>
NUP	<i>Nucléoporine</i>
ONUSIDA	Programme commun de l'Organisation des Nations Unis sur le VIH/SIDA
ORF	Cadre de lecture ouvert ( <i>Open Reading Frame</i> )
p6	Protéine de 6 kDa dérivé de Gag

PAMP	Motif moléculaire associé aux pathogènes ( <i>Pathogen-associated molecular pattern</i> )
PBS	Site de liaison de l'amorce ( <i>Primer Binding Site</i> )
PD-1	<i>Programmed cell death 1</i>
pDC	Cellule dendritique plasmacytoïde
PKC	Protéine kinase C
PI	Inhibiteur de protéase
PIC	Complexe de pré-intégration ( <i>Pre-Integration Complex</i> )
PI(4,5)P <sub>2</sub>	Phosphatidylinositol-4,5-bisphosphate
Pol	Polymérase
PP2A	Protéine phosphatase 2A
PPAR $\gamma$	<i>Peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor gamma</i>
PPP2R5	Complexe régulateur de PP2A
PPT	Tract de polypurine ( <i>PolyPurine Tract</i> )
PPTc	Tract central de polypurine ( <i>central PolyPurine Tract</i> )
PR	Protéase
PRR	Récepteur de reconnaissance de motifs moléculaires ( <i>Pattern recognition receptor</i> )
Pr55 <sup>Gag</sup>	Précurseur Gag de 55 kDa
Pr160 <sup>Gag-Pol</sup>	Précurseur Gag-Pol de 160 kDa
PrEP	prophylaxie pré-exposition ( <i>Pre-exposure prophylaxis</i> )
PS	Peptide signal
PSGL-1	<i>P-selectin glycoprotein ligand-1</i>
P-TEFb	<i>Positive transcription elongation factor b</i>
PVR	Récepteur du virus de la poliomyélite ( <i>Polio virus receptor</i> )
PVVIH	Personne vivant avec le VIH
Rab11-FIP1C	<i>Ras-associated binding protein 11 family interacting protein 1C</i>
Rab14	<i>Ras-associated binding protein 14</i>
rAd5	Vecteur adénoviral recombinant de sérotype 5
Ran	<i>Ras-related nuclear protein</i>
RANTES	<i>Regulated upon activation, normal T cell expressed and presumably secreted</i>
RBX	<i>Ring-box protein</i>



RE	<u>R</u> éticulum <u>e</u> ndoplasmique
RER	<u>R</u> éticulum <u>e</u> ndoplasmique <u>r</u> ugueux
Rev	<u>R</u> egulator of <u>e</u> xpression of <u>v</u> irion proteins
rhCD4	<u>C</u> D4 de macaque <u>r</u> hésus
RIDS	<i>Residual immune dysregulation syndrome</i>
RIG-I	<u>R</u> etinoic acid- <u>i</u> nducible gene <u>I</u>
RING	<u>R</u> eally <u>i</u> nteresting <u>n</u> ew gene
RLR	Récepteur de tpe RIG-I ( <u>R</u> IG-I- <u>l</u> ike <u>r</u> eceptor)
RRE	Élément de réponse à Rev ( <i>Rev-responsive element</i> )
RT	Transcriptase inverse ( <i>Reverse transcriptase</i> )
RTC	Complexe de rétrotranscription ( <u>R</u> everse <u>t</u> ranscription <u>c</u> omplex)
SAMHD1	<i>Sterile Alpha Motif and Histidine Aspartate domain-containing protein 1</i>
sCD4	<u>C</u> D4 <u>s</u> oluble
SCF	Complexe E3 ubiquitine ligase <u>S</u> kp1/ <u>C</u> ullin 1/ <u>F</u> -box
SERINC3	<u>S</u> erine <u>i</u> ncorporator <u>3</u>
SERINC5	<u>S</u> erine <u>i</u> ncorporator <u>5</u>
SERPINB9	<u>S</u> erine <u>p</u> roteinase <u>i</u> nhibitor <u>B9</u>
SIGLEC	<u>S</u> ialic acid-binding <u>i</u> mmunoglobulin-like <u>l</u> ectin
SHIV	Virus chimérique d'immunodéficience humaine/simienne ( <u>S</u> imian- <u>h</u> uman <u>i</u> mmunodeficiency <u>v</u> irus)
SIDA	<u>S</u> yndrome d'immunodéficience <u>a</u> cquise
SIRP $\alpha$	<u>S</u> ignal-regulatory <u>p</u> rotein <u>a</u> lpha
SIV	Virus d'immunodéficience simienne ( <u>s</u> imian <u>i</u> mmunodeficiency <u>v</u> irus)
SKP1	<u>S</u> -phase <u>k</u> inase-associated <u>p</u> rotein <u>1</u>
SLAM	<u>S</u> ignaling <u>l</u> ymphocytic <u>a</u> ctivation <u>m</u> olecule
SLFN11	<u>S</u> chlafen <u>11</u>
SLX4	<i>Structure-specific endonuclease subunit 4</i>
SMAC	<u>S</u> econd <u>m</u> itochondria-derived <u>a</u> ctivator of <u>c</u> aspases
smFRET	<u>S</u> ingle <u>m</u> olecule <u>F</u> örster <u>r</u> esonance <u>e</u> nergy <u>t</u> ransfer
SNAT1	<u>S</u> odium-coupled <u>n</u> eutral <u>a</u> mino acid <u>t</u> ransporter <u>1</u>
SNP	Polymorphisme mononucléotidique ( <u>S</u> ingle <u>n</u> ucleotide <u>p</u> olymorphism)

SOSIP.664	Trimère d'Env soluble (gp140) stabilisé par un pont disulfure (SOS) et la mutation I559P (IP) dans la gp41
Sp1	Protéine de spécificité 1 ( <i>Specificity protein 1</i> )
SP1	Peptide intercalaire 1 ( <i>Spacer Peptide 1</i> )
SP2	Peptide intercalaire 2 ( <i>Spacer Peptide 2</i> )
SPRY	<u>S</u> pla and <u>r</u> yanodine receptor
SRAS-CoV-2	<u>C</u> oronav <u>i</u> rus du <u>s</u> yndrome <u>r</u> espiratoire <u>a</u> igu <u>s</u> évère <u>2</u>
SRG-15	Modèle de souris humanisée ( <u>S</u> IRP $\alpha^{h/m}$ <u>R</u> ag2 $^{-/-}$ <u>I</u> l2rg $^{-/-}$ <u>I</u> L- <u>15</u> $^{h/m}$ )
STAT	<u>S</u> ignal <u>t</u> ransducer and <u>a</u> ctivator of <u>t</u> ranscription
STING	<u>S</u> timulator of <u>i</u> nterferon <u>g</u> enes
T20	Enfuvirtide
TAR	Élément de réponse de trans-activation ( <i>Trans-Activating Response element</i> )
Tat	<u>T</u> rans <u>a</u> ctivateur <u>t</u> ranscriptionnel
T <sub>CM</sub>	Lymphocyte T mémoire central
TCR	Récepteur des lymphocytes T ( <i>T cell receptor</i> )
T <sub>EM</sub>	Lymphocyte T mémoire effecteur
T/F	<u>T</u> ransmis/ <u>f</u> ondateur
T <sub>FH</sub>	Lymphocyte T folliculaire auxiliaire
TGN	Réseau <i>trans</i> -Golgi ( <i>Trans-Golgi network</i> )
Th	Lymphocyte T auxiliaire ( <i>T helper cell</i> )
TIGIT	<i>T cell immunoreceptor with Ig and ITIM domains</i>
TIM-3	<i>T cell immunoglobulin and mucin domain-containing protein 3</i>
TLR	Récepteur de type Toll ( <i>Toll-like receptor</i> )
TNPO3	<u>T</u> rans <u>p</u> ortine- <u>3</u>
TRIM5 $\alpha$	<i>Tripartite motif-containing protein 5 isoform <math>\alpha</math></i>
T <sub>RM</sub>	Lymphocyte T mémoire résident
T <sub>SCM</sub>	Lymphocyte T mémoire progéniteur
Tsg101	<i>Tumour Susceptibility Gene 101</i>
T <sub>TM</sub>	Lymphocyte T mémoire transitionnel
Ub	<u>U</u> biquitine
UFD1L	<u>U</u> biquitin <u>f</u> usion <u>d</u> egradation <u>1</u> <u>l</u> ike

ULBP	<i><u>UL16 binding protein</u></i>
UNG2	<i><u>Uracil-DNA glycosylase 2</u></i>
URF	Forme recombinante unique ( <i><u>U</u>nique <u>r</u>ecombinant <u>f</u>orm</i> )
U.S. FDA	<i><u>U</u>nited <u>S</u>tates <u>F</u>ood and <u>D</u>rug <u>A</u>dministration</i>
VCP	<i><u>V</u>alosin-<u>c</u>ontaining <u>p</u>rotein</i>
Vif	<i><u>V</u>irus <u>i</u>nfectivity <u>f</u>actor</i>
VIH-1	<i><u>V</u>irus de l'<u>i</u>mmunodéficienc<u>e</u> <u>h</u>umaine de type <u>1</u></i>
VIH-2	<i><u>V</u>irus de l'<u>i</u>mmunodéficienc<u>e</u> <u>h</u>umaine de type <u>2</u></i>
VISCONTI	<i><u>V</u>iro-<u>i</u>mmunological <u>s</u>ustained <u>c</u>ontrol after <u>t</u>reatment <u>i</u>nterruption</i>
Vpr	<i><u>V</u>iral <u>p</u>rotein <u>R</u></i>
Vpu	<i><u>V</u>iral <u>p</u>rotein <u>U</u></i>
Vpx	<i><u>V</u>iral <u>p</u>rotein <u>X</u></i>
ZAP	<i><u>Z</u>inc <u>f</u>inger <u>a</u>ntiviral <u>p</u>rotein</i>
ZFN	Nucléase à doigt de zinc ( <i><u>Z</u>inc <u>f</u>inger <u>n</u>uclease</i> )

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# **CHAPITRE I - INTRODUCTION**

Depuis le début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle, trois grandes pandémies d'origine virale ont été particulièrement meurtrières. Toutes ont été causées par des transmissions zoonotiques de virus à ARN enveloppés. Tout d'abord, à la fin de la Première Guerre mondiale, la pandémie d'influenza A H1N1 de 1918-1919, appelée la « grippe espagnole », éclate et on estime qu'un tiers de la population mondiale (soit environ 500 millions de personnes) ait été infecté et qu'environ 50 millions d'individus en soient décédés, touchant particulièrement les adolescents et jeunes adultes (1). Par la suite, au début des années 1980, un nombre croissant de manifestations cliniques du syndrome de l'immunodéficience acquise (SIDA) dans la communauté homosexuelle marque le début d'une pandémie causée par le virus de l'immunodéficience humaine de type 1 (VIH-1) qui n'est toujours pas résolue à ce jour. Autour de 79 millions de personnes ont contracté ce virus dans les quarante dernières années et près de la moitié en sont décédées en date de l'année 2020 (2). Finalement, un nouveau coronavirus infectant l'humain fait son apparition à la fin de l'année 2019; il s'agit du SRAS-CoV-2, l'agent étiologique de la COVID-19, une maladie se caractérisant par un syndrome de détresse respiratoire aigu dans les cas plus sévères, spécialement chez les personnes âgées. En date de juin 2022, on dénombre environ 547 millions d'infections par le SRAS-CoV-2 et au moins 6 millions de morts mondialement (3). Le bilan provisoire de cette troisième pandémie montre un taux de mortalité largement inférieur aux deux précédentes pandémies, notamment en raison du développement de vaccins et de thérapies efficaces en l'espace d'une année, du jamais vu. Ces avancés historiques ont largement bénéficié de la recherche effectuée lors des précédentes pandémies et épidémies causées par des virus, dont celles causées par l'influenza A, le VIH-1, le virus de l'hépatite C, le virus de la rage, le virus Ebola, le virus Zika et les coronavirus pathogènes (SRAS, MERS).

Parmi ces trois virus, le VIH-1 se démarque puisqu'il cause une infection chronique due à l'intégration de son génome dans l'ADN de son hôte, ce qui rend son élimination particulièrement difficile. Contrairement à l'influenza ou au SRAS-CoV-2, il n'existe toujours pas de vaccin efficace capable de prévenir ou de guérir l'infection par le VIH-1. Les personnes infectées sont traitées à l'aide de la thérapie antirétrovirale (ART) qui est capable de réprimer la réplication du virus, mais incapable d'éliminer le virus de l'organisme. Il est donc essentiel de développer de nouvelles approches thérapeutiques afin d'éradiquer le VIH-1 dans le but d'obtenir une cure fonctionnelle.

## 1.1 Le VIH-1 et le SIDA

### 1.1.1 Épidémiologie

Depuis son identification il y a près de quatre décennies, le VIH représente toujours un enjeu important de santé publique puisque les plus récents rapports publiés en 2020 par l'organisme ONUSIDA font état d'environ 37,7 millions de personnes vivant avec le VIH (PVVIH) à travers le monde, dont 36 millions d'adultes et 1,7 million d'enfants (2). Ces nombres ne cessent d'augmenter, en raison des effets du traitement par ART sur l'espérance de vie, et un taux soutenu de nouvelles infections, avec 1,5 million de personnes nouvellement infectées en 2020 (2). Bien que le traitement par ART ait considérablement augmenté l'espérance de vie et amélioré la santé des PVVIH, seule la moitié des personnes infectées dans le monde reçoit un traitement efficace (2). On dénombre 680 000 décès reliés au VIH/SIDA en 2020 uniquement (2). En 2014, ONUSIDA et ses partenaires ont fixé l'objectif 90-90-90 pour l'année 2020 : diagnostiquer 90 % de toutes les PVVIH, traiter 90 % des personnes qui connaissent leur statut, et supprimer le virus à des niveaux indétectables chez 90 % des personnes sous traitement (2, 4-6). Bien que les objectifs aient été presque atteints en 2020 (2), plusieurs obstacles se posent maintenant devant le nouvel objectif ambitieux adopté pour 2030 (95-95-95), notamment le nombre élevé de cas non-diagnostiqués (environ 16% des infections), le manque d'accès au traitement (chez 13% des cas diagnostiqués), l'adhésion au traitement de manière durable ainsi que la présence de toxicité ou de multirésistance à des classes d'antirétroviraux (ARV) chez certains PVVIH (7-9). Il est donc peu probable que le traitement par ART soit suffisant pour mettre fin à l'épidémie actuelle.

Dû à son mode de transmission, le VIH-1 fait partie des infections transmissibles sexuellement ou par le sang (ITSS), ce qui veut dire qu'il peut se propager par voie sexuelle, percutanée ou périnatale (10, 11). La très grande majorité des adultes (80%) contractent le VIH-1 à la suite d'une exposition aux muqueuses anale, vaginale ou pénienne (10, 11). Les populations les plus à risque de contracter le virus sont donc les hommes ayant des relations sexuelles avec des hommes (HARSAH), les transgenres, les travailleurs du sexe et les utilisateurs de drogues injectables (UDI) ainsi que leurs partenaires sexuelles. Ces populations clés sont responsables de la majorité des nouveaux cas enregistrés dans les dernières années dans les pays développés (2).



Or, ce sont les pays en développement qui connaissent les plus hauts taux de transmission, morbidité et mortalité liées au VIH-1; les taux de prévalence les plus élevés sont enregistrés chez les jeunes adultes hétérosexuels en Afrique subsaharienne (2). Afin de ralentir le rythme des nouvelles infections par le VIH-1, on mise sur plusieurs mesures au niveau de la prévention, notamment sur le port du condom, la circoncision et la prise d'ARV sous forme de prophylaxie préexposition (PrEP), mais leur application et leur accessibilité sont encore sous optimales, particulièrement dans les pays en développement (12-16). Tout comme le diagnostic et le traitement, ces mesures préventives ont été ralenties dans le contexte de la pandémie de COVID-19, ce qui pourrait aggraver la situation dans les régions endémiques (17-22). Le besoin d'un vaccin abordable et accessible est criant dans ces populations où le fardeau socio-économique, la criminalisation et la stigmatisation liés aux PVVIH sont toujours omniprésents (23-27).

### **1.1.2 Découverte et avancées scientifiques**

C'est dès 1981 que les premiers cas cliniques du syndrome d'immunodéficience acquise (SIDA) sont répertoriés, principalement chez de jeunes hommes homosexuels qui succombent à des infections opportunistes inhabituelles et à des tumeurs malignes rares (28-30). L'épidémie se propage ensuite chez les toxicomanes et les hémophiles, puis à la population générale, menant à la pire pandémie virale depuis la « grippe espagnole » (31-33). Au début de l'année 1983, un nouveau rétrovirus humain, appelé à l'époque « virus associé aux lymphadénopathies » (LAV), est isolé à l'Institut Pasteur, en France, par l'équipe du Dr Luc Montagnier et Dre Françoise Barré-Sinoussi (prix Nobel de médecine de 2008), à partir d'une culture dérivée d'un échantillon de biopsie de ganglion lymphatique d'un patient présentant une lymphadénopathie généralisée (34). La découverte du VIH-1 comme agent étiologique du SIDA est confirmée en 1984 par le groupe américain du Dr Robert C. Gallo qui le nomme « virus T-lymphotrope humain de type 3 » (HTLV-III) à cause de son apparente similarité avec les rétrovirus humains HTLV-I et HTLV-II (35-37). Or, LAV et HTLV-III s'avère éventuellement être des souches d'un seul et même virus qui est renommé VIH par le Comité international de taxonomie des virus en 1986 (38). Dans la même année, un autre rétrovirus humain morphologiquement similaire, mais génétiquement distinct, est isolé chez des patients atteints du SIDA en Afrique de l'Ouest et qui sera désigné VIH de type 2 (VIH-2) (39, 40).

Les premiers tests diagnostiques par ELISA sont mis au point dès 1984 (41-43) et approuvés par la *Food and Drug administration* (FDA) américaine en 1985 pour réaliser de vastes études séro-épidémiologiques et des criblages des banques de sang (44, 45). Le clonage moléculaire du VIH-1 (46-48) et le séquençage du génome viral en 1985 (49, 50) ont ensuite permis de développer des tests de charge virale et de résistance pour suivre les patients infectés par le VIH-1. Le premier médicament antirétroviral, un analogue nucléosidique appelé azidothymidine (AZT ou zidovudine/ZDV), originellement développé comme potentiel traitement anti-cancer, est approuvé par la FDA en 1987 comme traitement contre le VIH-1 (51, 52). Dans les années qui suivent, le développement de nouveaux inhibiteurs de la transcription virale (53-55) et nouvelles classes d'ARV (56, 57) permet l'élaboration de thérapies combinant deux (bithérapie) ou trois ARV (trithérapie), ce qui s'avère grandement efficace comparativement aux monothérapies déjà en place (58-64). Peu à peu, les études cliniques montrent que la prise systématique d'une thérapie combinatoire permet de supprimer la charge virale à des niveaux indétectables, ce qui empêche la transmission du virus à un partenaire sexuel non-infecté (65, 66). En 2012, les cliniciens commencent à utiliser ART comme traitement préventif (PrEP) contre le VIH-1, ce qui réduit les risques de transmission sexuelle avec une efficacité de 99% (67-71). Pour ce qui est du développement d'un vaccin prophylactique, les premiers essais vaccinaux de phase III débutent à la fin des années 1990 et sont menés par la compagnie de biotechnologie VaxGen (72, 73). Ils testent l'efficacité d'un vaccin sous-unitaire appelé AIDSVAX en Amérique du Nord/Europe (Vax004) et en Thaïlande (Vax003), mais les résultats publiés en 2005-2006 ne montrent aucune protection vaccinale contre l'infection par le VIH-1 (74, 75). Après l'échec consécutif de deux autres vaccins (76, 77), ceux-ci à base de vecteur adénoviral, la publication en 2009 des résultats de l'essai clinique RV144 mené en Thaïlande sont encourageants, quoique modestes. Le vaccin combinant un vecteur à base de poxvirus (ALVAC-HIV) et le vaccin AIDSVAX montre une efficacité vaccinale de 31,2 % à 42 mois post-vaccination par rapport au groupe contrôle (78). La même année, on rapporte pour la première fois la guérison complète d'un patient infecté par le VIH-1, dit « le patient de Berlin » (79, 80). Après son diagnostic de séropositivité, ce patient développe une leucémie et reçoit une greffe de cellules souches ayant la particularité d'être réfractaires au VIH-1 à cause d'une mutation dans le gène *ccr5*. Ce succès inattendu mène à la guérison de trois autres patients à ce jour : le patient de Londres (81), le patient de Düsseldorf (82) et la patiente de New York (83). En revanche, l'application de ce type

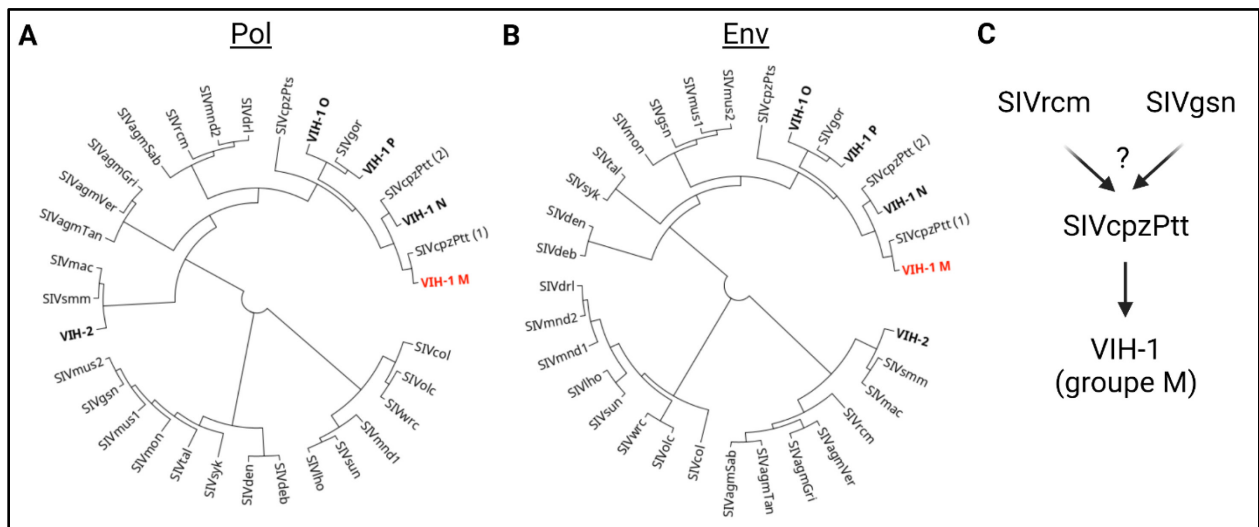
d'intervention est extrêmement limitée, ce qui souligne encore le besoin d'un traitement thérapeutique efficace, accessible et applicable à grande échelle.

### 1.1.3 Origine et classification

Le VIH est un virus enveloppé appartenant au genre lentivirus au sein de la famille des rétrovirus (*Retroviridae*). Cette famille de virus se distingue par sa capacité à transcrire son génome composé d'acide ribonucléique simple brin (ARNsb) en acide désoxyribonucléique double brin (ADNdb) à l'aide de sa transcriptase inverse (84, 85) ainsi que par sa capacité à intégrer son génome dans l'ADN cellulaire de l'hôte (86, 87). Il existe deux espèces de lentivirus retrouvées chez l'humain, le VIH-1 et le VIH-2, provoquant tous les deux le SIDA. Le VIH-1 est le virus responsable de la pandémie, tandis que les infections par le VIH-2 sont restreintes à des zones endémiques en Afrique de l'Ouest (88, 89). Cette différence s'explique par un faible taux de transmission et une progression de la maladie plus lente chez les individus infectés par le VIH-2 en raison de leur charge virale réduite (90-94). Depuis leurs découvertes, la possibilité que l'origine de ces virus soit due à des transmissions zoonotiques est étudiée. Le premier virus apparenté au VIH a été identifié pour la première fois chez des macaques en captivité, souffrant de symptômes semblables à ceux du SIDA (95). Depuis, des virus d'immunodéficience simienne (SIV) ont été retrouvés chez plus de 40 espèces de primates de l'Ancien Monde, notamment chez des hôtes naturels du virus tels que les singes verts africains (genre *Chlorocebus*), les singes mangabeys (genre *Cercocebus*) et les guenons arboricoles (genre *Cercopithecus*), dont les populations peuvent atteindre plus de 50% de prévalence (96-99). Curieusement, on constate que ces virus semblent largement non-pathogènes chez leurs hôtes naturels et qu'ils ne causent pas le SIDA, malgré des charges virales élevées (100-104).

À notre connaissance actuelle, seules trois espèces de primates (chimpanzés, gorilles et mangabeys) ont transmis leur virus à l'homme (Figure 1.1.1). Le VIH-1 se divise en quatre lignées phylogénétiquement distinctes, dont chacune est issue de transmissions distinctes d'un SIV à l'homme. Les virus du groupe M (majeur), à l'origine de la pandémie mondiale (>98% des infections), résultent d'un seul événement de transmission provenant d'une souche de SIV présente chez le chimpanzé d'Afrique centrale (SIVcpzPtt ; *Pan troglodytes troglodytes*), survenu il y a environ un siècle dans le sud-est du Cameroun, suivi d'une phase de propagation initiale à

Kinshasa, en République Démocratique du Congo (99, 105-107). Les souches de VIH-1 du groupe N (non-M, non-O, nouveau), détectées chez une vingtaine d'individus, proviennent également d'une souche de SIVcpzPtt (99), tandis que celles du groupe O (*outlier*) et P sont originaires de virus infectant les gorilles des plaines occidentales (SIVgor), eux-mêmes issus de souches provenant des chimpanzés (108-111). Comme le chimpanzé n'est pas un hôte naturel du virus, il est proposé que le SIVcpz soit dérivé d'une recombinaison entre un ancêtre des SIV retrouvés aujourd'hui chez les guenons (SIVgsn/mon/mus), et d'un précurseur du SIV présent chez les mangabeys (SIVrcm), compte tenu de la discordance existant entre les parties 5' et 3' de son génome (98, 112).



**Figure 1.1.1 – Phylogénie du VIH-1**

Arbre phylogénétique des virus de l'immunodéficience humaine et simienne. Cladogramme circulaire montrant la proximité génétique des séquences de (A) la polyprotéine Pol (1003 acides aminés) et (B) de la glycoprotéine Env (856 acides aminés) obtenus à partir de séquences des différents lentivirus de primates provenant de la base de données VIH du Laboratoire National de Los Alamos ([www.hiv.lanl.gov/content/sequence/HIV/mainpage.html](http://www.hiv.lanl.gov/content/sequence/HIV/mainpage.html)). Une séquence complète du génome d'une souche représentative a été utilisée pour chaque virus. L'alignement des séquences et la génération des cladogrammes ont été réalisés à l'aide du logiciel Geneious Prime version 2022.0.2 (<https://www.geneious.com>). Les différentes souches de VIH sont écrites en gras et la souche pandémique (VIH-1 groupe M) est mise en évidence en rouge. (C) Possible évènement de recombinaison entre SIVrcm et SIVgsn menant à la génération de SIVcpzPtt et transmission à l'homme menant à la pandémie de VIH-1 du groupe M. Diagramme créé avec [BioRender.com](https://www.biorender.com).

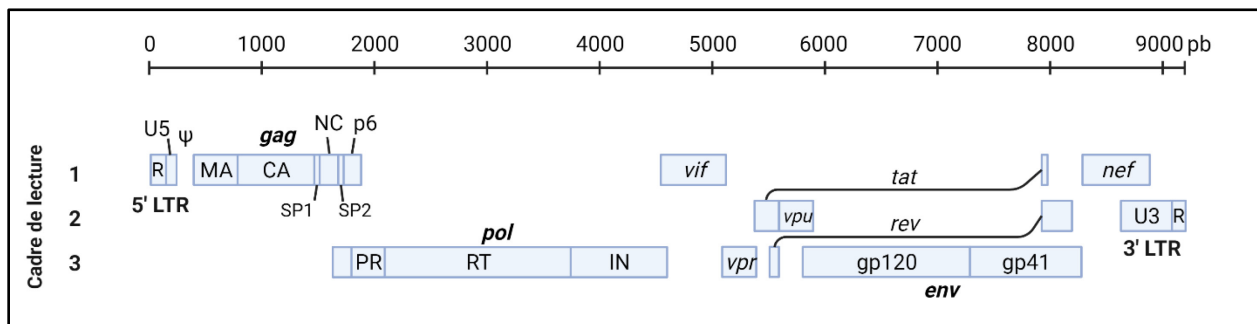
Pour ce qui est du VIH-2, il se divise en neuf groupes (A à I) qui sont issus de neuf transmissions zoonotiques de SIV infectant les mangabeys (SIVsmm) (113). Ces virus ont

également une proximité génétique avec les isolats de SIV retrouvés chez les macaques (SIVmac) en 1985. Comme le macaque n'est pas un hôte naturel du SIV, des études ultérieures ont confirmé que le SIVmac a été généré par la transmission accidentelle du SIVsmm provenant de mangabeys dans des centres de primates américains (114). Puisque l'infection des macaques par le SIV est associée au développement rapide d'une maladie s'apparentant au SIDA, ce modèle est toujours utilisé aujourd'hui pour comprendre la pathogenèse du VIH-1 ainsi que pour l'élaboration de vaccins et de traitements contre ce virus (115).

Au fur et à mesure que le VIH-1 de groupe M s'est répandu dans le monde, sa diffusion a impliqué des événements fondateurs qui ont conduit à la prédominance de différentes lignées (sous-types) du groupe M dans différentes zones géographiques. En raison de la grande diversité génétique du VIH-1, le groupe M peut aujourd'hui être classé en neuf sous-types/clades (A-D, F-H, J, K), et plus d'une centaine de formes recombinantes circulantes (CRFs) et de formes recombinantes uniques (URFs) générées par des événements de recombinaison chez des individus infectés par plusieurs clades en même temps (88, 116). De nos jours, les sous-types les plus répandus dans le monde sont les clades C (46,6%), B (12,1%), A (10,2%), G (4,6%) et D (2,6%) (117). Les sous-types A et D sont originaires d'Afrique centrale, mais ont finalement établi des épidémies en Afrique de l'Est (118), tandis que le sous-type C a été introduit en Afrique australe, où il prédomine, d'où il s'est propagé en Inde par la suite (119, 120). Le sous-type B, qui représente la grande majorité des infections par le VIH-1 sur le continent américain, en Europe et en Australie, est issu d'une souche africaine unique qui semble s'être d'abord répandue en Haïti dans les années 1960, puis aux États-Unis et dans d'autres pays occidentaux (121). Le sous-type G est principalement retrouvé en Afrique de l'Ouest (122). D'autre part, l'effet fondateur se dissipe graduellement dans les dernières données causant une augmentation de la diversité génétique du VIH-1 (123). On note également la montée des cas par des CRFs au cours des dernières années, représentant environ 17% des infections (117). On documente des épidémies grandissantes des souches CRF01\_AE en Asie du Sud-Est et en Chine (124, 125), CRF02\_AG en Afrique de l'Ouest (126) et CRF07\_BC en Chine (127). Cette large diversité génétique du VIH-1 à l'échelle mondiale constitue un obstacle majeur au développement de nouveaux vaccins et traitements efficaces contre ce virus.

### 1.1.4 Génome et structure

Le génome du VIH-1 est constitué de deux copies d'ARNsb non-épissée à polarité positive et d'une longueur de 9,2 kilobases (kb) chacune qui sont encapsidées dans le noyau de la particule virale (128, 129). La taille de l'ARN génomique du VIH-1 est limitée en raison de la fidélité de sa transcriptase inverse et de sa capacité d'encapsidation (130-132), forçant le virus à adopter plusieurs stratégies afin d'optimiser l'utilisation de ses séquences codantes, notamment par l'utilisation des trois cadres de lecture, le chevauchement des différents gènes, la synthèse de polyprotéines et l'épissage alternatif des ARN messagers (ARNm) (133-135). L'ARN viral (ARNv) génomique est coiffé à l'extrémité 5' et polyadénylé à l'extrémité 3' (136, 137), comme les autres ARNm eucaryotes, et les deux extrémités de l'ARNv sont flanquées de longues séquences répétées terminales (LTR) composées de séquences non-traduites en 5' et 3' (élément U) et de séquences répétées inversées (élément R) (138). Lors de l'infection, l'ARNv est rétrotranscrit en ADNdb, ce qui mène à la duplication des éléments U de part et autre du génome (U3-R-U5), formant ainsi le promoteur de la transcription des gènes viraux à l'extrémité 5' (138). Chaque ARNv comporte neuf cadres de lecture ouverts (ORFs) qui se chevauchent et codent pour quinze protéines virales différentes (Figure 1.1.2) (128).



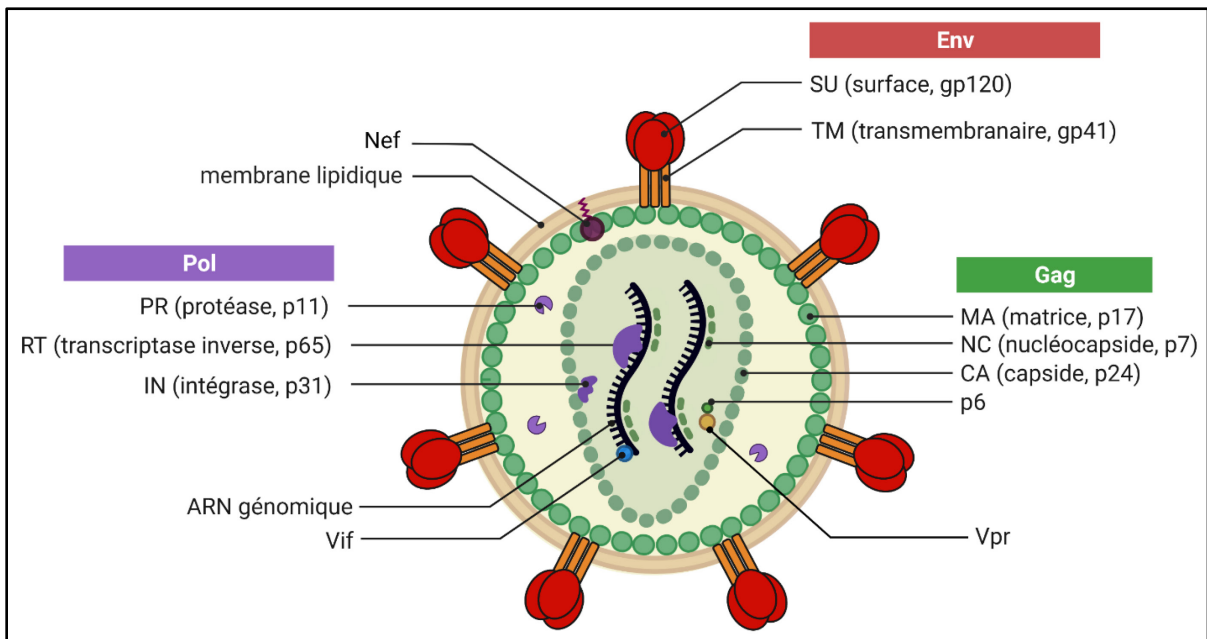
**Figure 1.1.2 - Organisation génomique du VIH-1**

L'organisation du génome du VIH-1 de 9,2 kb avec les extrémités 5' et 3' composées de longues répétitions terminales (LTR) et les différents ORFs répartis sur les trois différents cadres de lecture, ceux-ci codant pour les protéines et polyprotéines virales. U5 : région non-traduite en 5' ; U3 : région non-traduite en 3' ; R : séquence répétée inversée ; ψ : séquence d'encapsidation ; gag : gène codant pour les protéines structurales ; pol : gène codant pour les enzymes ; env : gène codant pour les glycoprotéines de surface ; MA : matrice ; CA : capsid ; NC : nucléocapsid ; SP1 : peptide intercalaire 1 ; SP2 : peptide intercalaire 2 ; PR : protéase ; RT : transcriptase inverse ; IN : intégrase ; pb : paires de bases. Le génome de la souche HXB2 a servi de référence pour cette figure (128) Diagramme créé avec [BioRender.com](https://www.biorender.com).

Les trois principaux produits structurels et enzymatiques du génome du VIH-1 sont Gag (*group-specific antigen*), Pol (polymérase) et Env (enveloppe), qui sont d'abord transcrits sous forme de longues polyprotéines, et ensuite clivés en différentes protéines fonctionnelles par la protéase virale (PR) dans le cas de Gag et Pol, ou par une protéase cellulaire de type furine pour Env ([139-141](#)). À la suite de son clivage, le précurseur Gag (Pr55<sup>Gag</sup>) génère les protéines de la matrice (MA, p17), la capsid (CA, p24), la nucléocapsid (NC, p7) et la protéine p6 ([142](#)). Il existe également des peptides intercalaires (SP1 et SP2), qui jouent un rôle dans la régulation de l'assemblage du virion et de la maturation de la capsid ([143](#), [144](#)). Alternativement, la production du précurseur Gag-Pol (Pr160<sup>gag-pol</sup>) survient lors du décalage (*frameshift*) des ribosomes à la jonction entre les gènes *gag* et *pol*, permettant l'expression des enzymes virales telles que la protéase (PR, p12), la transcriptase inverse (RT) comprenant un domaine RNase H (p65) ou non (p51) ainsi que l'intégrase (IN, p32) ([145](#), [146](#)). Le gène *env* code pour le précurseur des glycoprotéines d'enveloppe (gp160), qui est clivé pour former les sous-unités externes (SU; gp120) et transmembranaire (TM; gp41) ([147](#)). En plus des protéines structurelles, le génome du VIH-1 code pour les protéines régulatrices Tat (transactivateur transcriptionnel) et Rev (régulateur de l'expression des protéines virales) qui sont nécessaires à la transcription et l'export des ARNv du noyau ([148](#), [149](#)), ainsi que les protéines accessoires Vif (*viral infectivity factor*), Vpr (*viral protein r*), Vpu (*viral protein u*) et Nef (*negative factor*), qui ont un impact sur l'infectivité et la pathogenèse du virus ([150-153](#)). De son côté, le VIH-2 ne code pas pour Vpu, mais plutôt pour Vpx (*viral protein x*), expliquant partiellement sa pathogénicité réduite ([154](#)).

Les particules virales du VIH-1 sont de forme sphérique et leur diamètre moyen qui varie de 100 à 145 nm (**Figure 1.1.3**) ([155-157](#)). Chaque virion est entouré d'une bicouche lipidique qui provient de la membrane cytoplasmique de la cellule hôte ([158](#), [159](#)). Au cours de son assemblage, le VIH-1 incorpore 7 à 10 trimères d'Env, formés de trois hétérodimères de gp120 et de gp41 liés de manière non-covalente ([160-162](#)) et environ 2000 à 3000 copies des polyprotéines Gag et Gag-Pol, à un ratio de 20:1, qui s'assemble à la membrane cytoplasmique en particules virales immatures ([157-159](#), [161](#), [163](#)). La génération des particules virales pleinement infectieuses et morphologiquement matures nécessite une libération des protéines structurelles individuelles de Gag dans une série d'étapes de clivage étroitement régulées et catalysées par PR ([164](#)). Chez le virion mature, la surface interne de la membrane virale est tapissée de protéines MA assemblées

sous forme d'hexamères de trimères et qui reste ancrées dans la membrane via un groupement myristoyl dans leur portion N-terminale (165). MA permet l'incorporation d'Env dans les particules virales en interagissant avec sa queue cytoplasmique (162, 166). À l'intérieur du virion, les protéines CA s'arrangent sous forme d'hexamères ou de pentamères, qui seront assemblés ensemble pour former une capsidie de forme conique composée d'environ 1500 monomères de CA (167-170). À l'intérieur de la capsidie, les protéines NC se lient à l'ARNv dimérisé via son interaction avec la séquence d'encapsidation Psi ( $\psi$ ) et possèdent également une activité de chaperonne des acides nucléiques qui favorisent la stabilité du génome avant l'initiation de la rétrotranscription (171-173). Le complexe ribonucléoprotéique (RNP) formé par l'ARNv et NC contient également les enzymes RT et IN qui seront nécessaires pour répliquer son génome sous forme d'ADNdb et de l'intégrer dans l'ADN de la cellule hôte lors de l'infection (174, 175). Certaines protéines accessoires sont également incorporées dans les virions : Vif, via son interaction avec l'ARNv (176), Vpr, via son interaction avec la protéine p6 (177, 178), et Nef, grâce à la myristoylation de sa partie N-terminale (179).



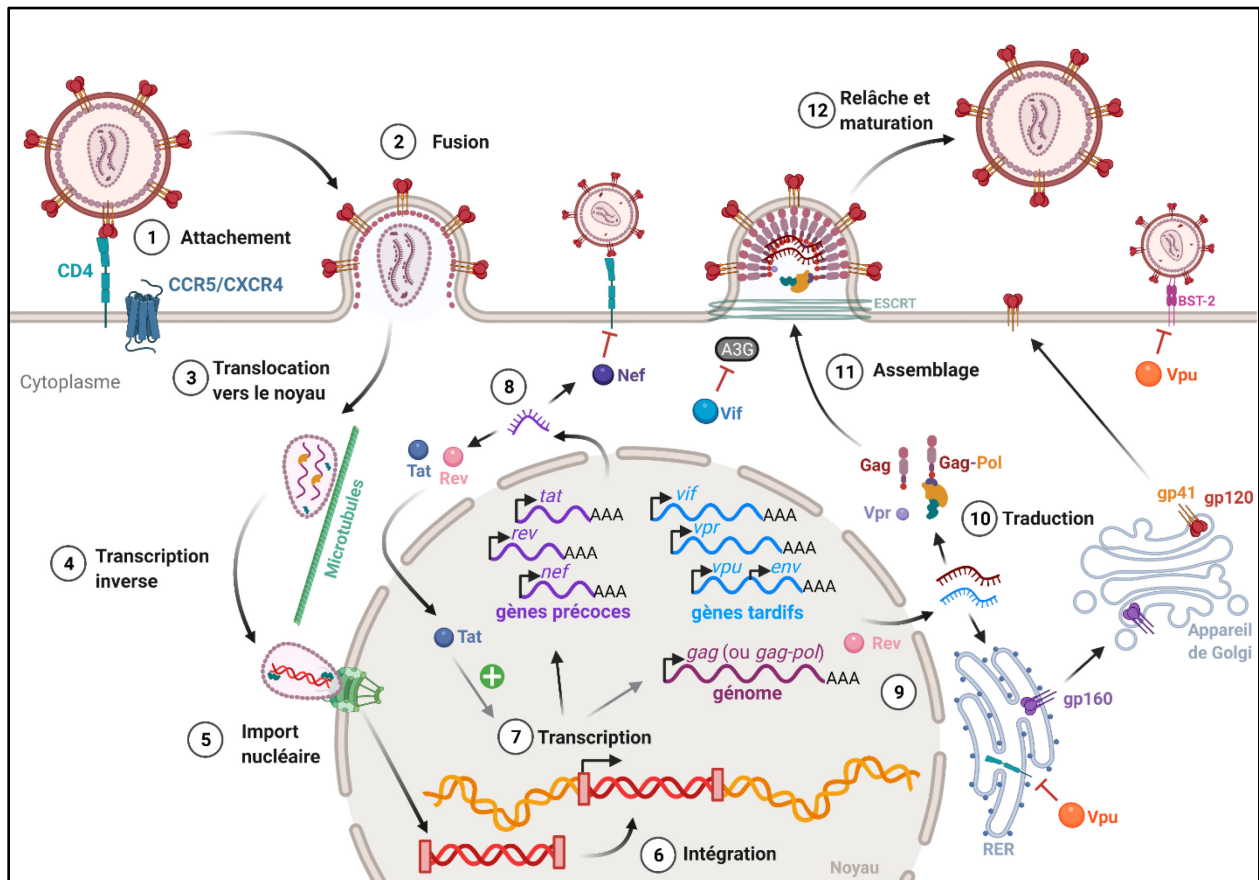
**Figure 1.1.3 - Structure du virion mature du VIH-1**

Vue schématique de la particule mature du VIH-1 détaillant les protéines virales et la structure du virion. L'Env du VIH-1, composé de complexes trimériques de gp120 et gp41, est le seul antigène viral présent sur le feuillet externe de la membrane lipidique. La queue cytoplasmique de la gp41 interagit avec MA. Les protéines CA forment une capsidie conique qui contient un dimère d'ARNv lié par la protéine NC. La protéine p6, les enzymes PR, RT et IN ainsi que les protéines accessoires Vif, Vpr et Nef sont également présents dans le virus. Diagramme créé avec [BioRender.com](https://www.biorender.com).



### 1.1.5 Cycle de réplication

Lors de l'infection, le VIH-1 prend le contrôle de la cellule et détourne de nombreuses protéines de l'hôte afin d'assurer un cycle de réplication efficace. Le cycle de réplication du VIH-1 peut être divisé en deux phases distinctes : la phase précoce et la phase tardive. Le stade précoce comprend toutes les étapes allant de l'entrée du virus à l'intégration de l'ADN viral. La phase tardive comprend la transcription de l'ADN proviral, la traduction des ARNm viraux, l'assemblage du virus et la relâche de virions matures (**Figure 1.1.4**).



**Figure 1.1.4 - Cycle de réplication du VIH-1**

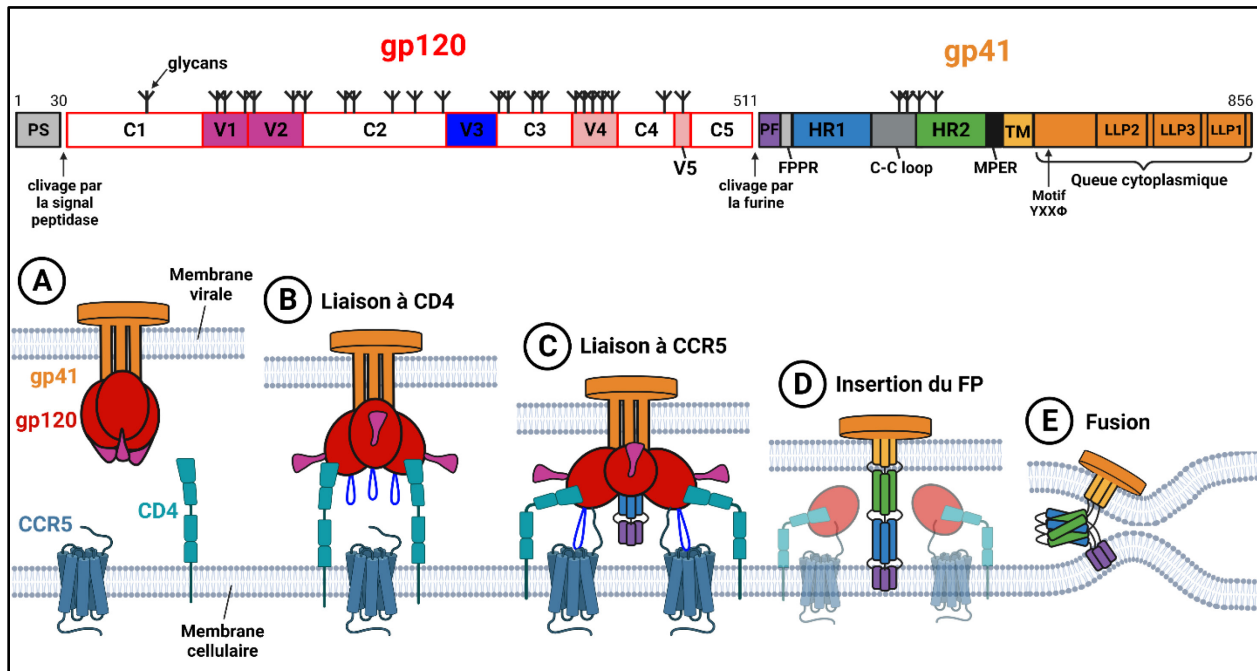
Représentation schématisée des principales étapes de la réplication virale : (1) attachement du virus via l'interaction avec le récepteur CD4, (2) fusion et entrée, (3) translocation de la capsid virale vers le noyau le long des microtubules, (4) rétrotranscription de l'ARNsb génomique en ADNdb, (5) désassemblage de la capsid et import nucléaire du complexe de pré-intégration (PIC), (6) intégration dans l'ADN cellulaire, (7) transcription, (8) export nucléaire des transcrits multi-épissés et (9) non-épissés ou mono-épissés, (10) traduction des protéines viraales dans le cytoplasme ou le réticulum endoplasmique rugueux (RER), (11) assemblage et bourgeonnement, et (12) relâche et maturation des virions. A3G: APOBEC3G. Diagramme créé avec [BioRender.com](https://www.biorender.com).

### 1.1.5.1 Glycoprotéines d'enveloppe et entrée virale

Le cycle de réplication du VIH-1 débute par l'entrée du virus dans une cellule cible de l'hôte, un processus nécessitant la fusion entre les membranes du virus et de la cellule, ce qui est médié par les glycoprotéines d'enveloppe virale (Env) (**Figure 1.1.5**). Bien que chaque virion possède en moyenne 7 à 10 trimères d'Env à sa surface, la plupart des souches de VIH-1 ne nécessitent en moyenne que 2 ou 3 trimères fonctionnels afin d'initier l'infection ([180](#), [181](#)). Dans son processus de biosynthèse, Env est traduit sous forme d'un précurseur inactif (gp160) dans le réticulum endoplasmique, qui est par la suite clivé par la signal peptidase pour enlever le peptide signal en N-terminale et par la furine cellulaire afin de générer deux sous-unités fonctionnelles associées de manière non-covalente : la gp120 et la gp41 ([141](#), [182](#), [183](#)). L'Env fonctionnelle est assemblée sous forme d'un trimère comprenant trois sous-unités gp120 qui contiennent les sites de liaison aux récepteurs de l'hôte et trois sous-unités gp41 qui comprennent la machinerie de fusion ([184-186](#)). La sous-unité gp120 de Env est constituée de cinq régions constantes (C1 à C5) et de cinq régions variables (V1 à V5) ([187](#), [188](#)). La structure globale de la gp120 est composée d'un domaine interne hautement conservé interagissant avec la gp41 et d'un domaine externe variable et lourdement glycosylé ([185](#), [189-191](#)). La sous-unité gp41 est composée d'un domaine extracellulaire, d'un domaine transmembranaire et d'une longue queue cytoplasmique en C-terminale ([192-195](#)). Le domaine extracellulaire de la gp41 contient les régions importantes pour le processus de fusion, notamment le peptide de fusion et les régions de répétitions d'heptades (HR1 et HR2) ([196](#)). L'énergie nécessaire au processus de fusion provient du repliement d'Env qui est déclenché par ses récepteurs de manière séquentielle, ce qui fait passer Env d'une conformation pré-fusion métastable à haute énergie vers un état post-fusion stable de basse énergie ([197](#), [198](#)).

Le processus d'entrée débute par l'attachement de la particule virale à la cellule cible. L'attachement peut être relativement non spécifique, l'Env interagissant avec les protéoglycane faits de sulfate d'héparane (HSPG) chargés négativement de la surface cellulaire ([199-201](#)), des lectines de type C telles que DC-SIGN et L-SIGN ([202-204](#)) et des lectines de type SIGLEC ([205](#)). L'incorporation de molécules d'adhésion cellulaires telles que ICAM-1, CD44 et CD62L dans la particule virale permet également de favoriser la rétention des virions à la surface des cellules via l'interaction avec leur récepteur respectif ([206-208](#)). Les protéines TIM peuvent également

favoriser l'attachement en interagissant avec les phosphatidylsérines exposées sur le feuillet externe de la membrane virale (209). L'attachement du VIH-1 à la cellule hôte par l'un de ces mécanismes amène Env à proximité de son récepteur et de ses corécepteurs, ce qui augmente l'efficacité de l'infection (210, 211).



**Figure 1.1.5 – Les glycoprotéines d’enveloppe et l’entrée du VIH-1**

Les glycoprotéines d’Env sont clivées par la signal peptidase et la furine cellulaire en deux sous-unités fonctionnelles (gp120 et gp41). Env possède environ 27 sites de glycosylation recouvrant sa surface protéique. La sous-unité gp120 est composée de cinq régions constantes (C1-C5) et de cinq domaines variables (V1-V5). La sous-unité gp41 est composée d’un ectodomaine, d’un domaine transmembranaire (TM), et d’une queue cytoplasmique en C-terminale. Dans l’ectodomaine se trouvent le peptide de fusion, les régions de répétition d’heptades (HR1 et HR2), et la région externe proximale à la membrane (MPER). Dans la queue C-terminale se trouvent les séquences peptidiques lytiques du lentivirus (LLP1, LLP2 et LLP3), et le motif d’endocytose YXXΦ (près de l’extrémité N-terminale). PS : peptide signal; FPPR : *fusion peptide proximal region*; C-C loop : boucle disulfure. (A) L’entrée commence par (B) la liaison de la gp120 à son récepteur CD4, ce qui déclenche l’ouverture d’Env, ce qui permet (C) la liaison de la gp120 à son corécepteur CCR5 (ou CXCR4). (D) La liaison du corécepteur libère le peptide de fusion qui s’insère dans la membrane cellulaire. (E) Suite au détachement de la gp120, la gp41 se replie sur elle-même grâce aux régions complémentaires HR1 et HR2, formant le faisceau à 6 hélices (6HB) nécessaire à la fusion des membranes virale et cellulaire. Diagramme créé avec [BioRender.com](https://BioRender.com).

Le récepteur primaire du VIH-1 est CD4 ([212](#), [213](#)), une glycoprotéine de surface cellulaire contenant quatre domaines de type immunoglobuline (D1 à D4), avec D1 à l'extrémité distale de la membrane ([214](#)). Son interaction avec la sous-unité gp120 est essentielle pour initier le processus de fusion du virus en induisant des changements de conformation d'Env pour exposer le site de liaison du corécepteur ([215-218](#)). Le site de liaison au CD4 (CD4BS) d'Env représente un arrangement quaternaire très complexe de cinq boucles différentes qui se rencontrent pour former cette structure hautement conservée. Trois de ces boucles convergent pour former la cavité Phe43 : la boucle de liaison au CD4 (région C3), la boucle  $\beta$ 20- $\beta$ 21 (région C4) et la boucle de sortie du domaine externe (région C5) ([219](#)). Deux autres boucles en périphérie de la cavité Phe43 sont également impliquées dans la liaison au CD4 : la boucle D (région C2) et la boucle V5 ([219](#)). La cavité Phe43 est une structure hautement conservée du domaine externe où le résidu Phe43 du CD4 s'insère et établit de nombreux contacts avec des résidus conservés de la gp120 ([219](#)). Cette interaction provoque des changements conformationnels majeurs menant à « l'ouverture » du trimère d'Env, notamment grâce au réarrangement de la boucle V1/V2 située à l'apex du trimère, s'éloignant de l'axe central du trimère ([220](#), [221](#)). Ce réarrangement permet ainsi l'exposition de la boucle V3 et la formation d'une passerelle en feuillet  $\beta$  (*bridging sheet*) entre le domaine externe et interne à la base de la boucle V1/V2 ([220](#), [221](#)). Ces deux éléments structuraux forment ensemble le site de liaison au corécepteur ([222-224](#)), soit CCR5 ([225-231](#)) ou CXCR4 ([232](#), [233](#)). Ces changements conformationnels induits par le CD4 sont guidés par les couches topologiques 1, 2 et 3 du domaine interne de la gp120 ([234-237](#)). La liaison du corécepteur déclenche d'autres changements de conformation au sein de la gp41 qui favorisent la libération du peptide de fusion hydrophobe de la gp41 qui s'insère dans la membrane de la cellule hôte ([238](#)). Le détachement de la gp120 permet l'adoption d'une structure intermédiaire allongée par la gp41 ([239](#)), et les régions HR1 et HR2 de chaque sous-unité se replient pour former un trimère de structures en épingle à cheveux (6HB) grâce à leur surface complémentaire ([194](#), [240](#), [241](#)). Ainsi, le 6HB est composé d'un trimère de HR1 entouré de trois hélices HR2 disposées de manière antiparallèle ([196](#)). Cela permet de rapprocher la membrane virale et la membrane cible, puis de former le pore de fusion, ce qui entraîne la libération de la capsid virale dans le cytoplasme de la cellule cible ([242-244](#)). Comme ce processus est indépendant du pH ([245](#), [246](#)), l'entrée du VIH-1 se fait souvent au niveau de la membrane cytoplasmique, mais peut également se faire dans les compartiments endosomaux dans certains types cellulaires, notamment les macrophages ([247-253](#)).

La présence du récepteur et des corécepteurs dicte la permissivité et le tropisme cellulaire du VIH-1. En effet, le VIH-1 cible de manière préférentielle les lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup>, dû à la forte densité d'expression de CD4 à leur surface, mais peut également cibler d'autres cellules du système immunitaire telles que les macrophages et les cellules dendritiques (254). Les souches virales sont classées en fonction de l'utilisation des corécepteurs : celles utilisant le récepteur CCR5 sont appelées isolats R5 et celles qui utilisent le récepteur CXCR4 sont appelées isolats X4 (255). Une classe distincte de souches à tropisme mixte utilise les deux récepteurs et est appelée isolats R5X4 (255). Les souches R5 possèdent une capacité de réplication supérieure à celle des souches X4 dans des conditions homéostatiques et sont les principales souches transmises entre individus (256, 257). L'expression de chacun de ces corécepteurs dicte également la susceptibilité d'un type cellulaire à l'infection. Par exemple, CCR5 est surtout exprimé sur les lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> mémoires ou activés, les macrophages et les cellules dendritiques, tandis que CXCR4 est exprimé principalement sur les lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> naïves (254). Parmi les lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup>, les sous-types cellulaires à différenciation Th1 et Th17 sont les plus susceptibles à l'infection grâce à leur forte expression de CCR5 et CXCR4 (256, 258, 259).

### 1.1.5.2 Étapes précoces du cycle de réplication

Après avoir pénétré dans la cellule hôte, la capsid doit être acheminée vers le noyau afin de pouvoir intégrer le génome viral dans l'ADN cellulaire. La capsid étant trop grande pour diffuser librement dans le cytoplasme encombré, le VIH-1 utilise le réseau de microtubules (MT) en induisant sa stabilisation et en détournant les protéines motrices pour assurer le transport actif de la capsid virale vers le noyau (260-262). Le trafic le long du réseau des MT est réalisé par les moteurs de dynéine et de kinésine et constitue un moyen primaire de transport cytoplasmique dans les cellules (263). La dynéine facilite les mouvements vers l'intérieur en direction du noyau, tandis que les kinésines médient les mouvements vers la périphérie cellulaire (263). La capsid du VIH-1 se sert des deux types de moteur pour obtenir un mouvement rétrograde net en se liant à leur protéine adaptatrice respective, BICD2 et FEZ1 (264-267). Ce transport bidirectionnel permet d'éviter les obstacles stériques et est modulé par le VIH-1 via la phosphorylation de FEZ1, permettant d'activer ou de désactiver le moteur de kinésine (268). Durant son transport vers le noyau, la capsid s'associe également avec d'autres facteurs cellulaires tels que l'inositol

hexaphosphate (IP<sub>6</sub>) et la cyclophiline A (CypA), deux facteurs lui permettant de garder son intégrité structurelle jusqu'à son arrimage au complexe du pore nucléaire (NPC) ([269-274](#)).

Pendant le processus de translocation vers le noyau, l'ARNv du VIH-1 est converti en ADN par le complexe de rétrotranscription (RTC), dirigé par la RT avec la contribution de la protéine NC qui agit à titre de chaperonne aidant au repliement adéquat des acides nucléiques ([275](#), [276](#)). La RT possède deux activités enzymatiques comprenant une activité d'ADN polymérase, qui peut utiliser l'ARN ou l'ADN comme matrice, et une activité RNase H, qui dégrade exclusivement l'ARN dans le contexte d'un duplex d'ARN/ADN ([138](#)). Pour commencer ce processus, l'ARN de transfert Lys3 (ARNt<sup>Lys3</sup>) d'origine cellulaire est utilisé comme amorce pour se lier au site de liaison de l'amorce (PBS) présent dans l'élément U5 de l'extrémité 5' de l'ARNv ([175](#), [277](#)). Des pores présents dans la capsid, situés au centre des hexamères de CA, permettent l'import sélectif de désoxynucléotides triphosphates (dNTPs), nécessaires à la polymérisation de l'ADNv ([278](#), [279](#)). La RT catalyse alors la synthèse de l'ADN pendant que son activité RNase H dégrade progressivement l'extrémité 5' restante de l'ARN matrice du complexe ARN/ADN pour libérer l'ADNsb à polarité négative ([280-282](#)). Lorsque la transcription inverse de l'extrémité 5' est terminée, l'élément R du brin d'ADN nouvellement synthétisé s'hybride alors à l'élément R présent à l'extrémité 3' de l'ARNv dans un processus appelé transfert du premier brin ([283](#)). Comme le VIH porte deux copies de l'ARN génomique, le transfert du premier brin peut se produire en *cis* ou en *trans*, ce qui explique les possibilités de recombinaison virale ([284](#), [285](#)). Ce transfert d'ADN permet la synthèse complète du premier brin d'ADNv, tout en dégradant l'ARN matrice, à l'exception du tract de polypurine (PPT), qui est résistant à l'activité de la RNase H et qui servira d'amorce pour produire le second brin d'ADN à polarité positive ([286](#), [287](#)). Le VIH-1 possède deux séquences PPT, l'une étant situé près de l'extrémité 3' de l'ARNv et l'autre étant présent dans la région centrale du génome (PPTc) ([288](#)). La synthèse du second brin d'ADNv est initiée lorsque la RT utilise les séquences PPT comme amorce ([289](#)), ce qui permet l'élongation jusqu'à la séquence PBS présente à l'extrémité 3', où l'ARNt<sup>Lys3</sup> est dégradé par la RNase H ([290](#), [291](#)). Ceci permet l'hybridation des séquences PBS complémentaires présentes aux extrémités 3' et 5' dans un processus appelé transfert du second brin, permettant de compléter la synthèse des deux brins d'ADNv ([283](#)). Le produit final est un ADNdb avec les régions U3, R et U5 formant les LTR aux extrémités et flanquant les régions codantes du génome ([138](#)). Les possibilités de

recombinaison et la fidélité déficiente de RT pendant le processus de rétrotranscription contribuent à la grande diversité génétique du VIH-1 ([292](#)). Suite à la rétrotranscription, le complexe pré-intégration (PIC) s'assemble à partir de l'ADNv nouvellement synthétisé; celui-ci comporte également les protéines virales IN, RT, MA, et Vpr ([293-295](#)).

La complétion du processus de rétrotranscription est coordonnée avec l'initiation du processus de désassemblage de la capsid virale ([296-298](#)). Les études récentes favorisent un modèle dans lequel le désassemblage de la capsid se produit après la translocation nucléaire en fournissant des preuves convaincantes que la transcription inverse se finalise dans le noyau et que la capsid entière pénètre dans le noyau et reste intacte jusqu'à ce qu'elle se désassemble et libère le PIC près des sites d'intégration ([299-303](#)). Pour ce faire, la capsid s'arrime au NPC via sa capture par la protéine NUP358 présente dans les filaments cytoplasmiques du NPC ([304, 305](#)). La capsid interagit ensuite de manière séquentielle avec la protéine NUP153 du panier nucléaire du NPC ([306-309](#)), puis avec le complexe CPSF6/TNPO3 permettant son passage à travers l'enveloppe nucléaire et sa relâche dans le noyau ([310-316](#)). Bien que la taille du pore nucléaire limite habituellement la pénétration de macromolécules ayant une taille excédant 40 nm, il existe une certaine hétérogénéité au niveau de la taille du NPC, qui peut se dilater jusqu'à environ 64 nm de diamètre, permettant ainsi le passage de capsid virale complète (~60 nm) ([303, 317, 318](#)). Un remodelage de la capsid par la protéine CPSF6 facilite également le passage à travers du NPC ([319-321](#)).

La dernière étape précoce du cycle de réplication du VIH-1 est l'intégration de l'ADNv dans le génome de la cellule hôte ([322](#)). L'enzyme virale IN joue un rôle crucial dans ce processus, ainsi que la protéine cellulaire LEDGF/p75, en plus d'autres protéines virales (MA, NC et Vpr) qui contribuent à accroître l'efficacité de l'intégration ([323-327](#)). LEDGF facilite l'attachement et empêche la circularisation de l'ADN et la formation de cercles 2-LTR puisque cette forme du génome ne peut pas être intégrée ([328](#)). Lors de la première étape de l'intégration, l'intégrase retire deux nucléotides de chaque extrémité 3' de l'ADNdb ([329, 330](#)). Dans la deuxième étape, appelée transfert de brin d'ADN, les extrémités 3' de l'ADNv induisent une cassure double brin de l'ADN cellulaire et sont jointes de manière covalente à chaque brin ([331](#)). Finalement, les interstices dus aux deux nucléotides supplémentaires présents aux extrémités 5' de l'ADNv sont réparées par des

enzymes cellulaires pour achever l'intégration (332). Il a été suggéré que l'intégration se produit de préférence au niveau des régions de la chromatine actives sur le plan transcriptionnel et près du NPC (333-335). Ce processus est facilité par l'interaction de LEDGF avec les nucléosomes H3K36me3, enrichis dans les régions d'euchromatine riches en gènes et où la machinerie de réparation de l'ADN est recrutée en grande proportion (336-339).

### 1.1.5.3 Étapes tardives du cycle de réplication

Après l'intégration, l'ADN viral intégré est appelé " provirus " et sert de matrice pour la transcription de toutes les protéines virales structurales, régulatrices et accessoires. La transcription virale initiale est médiée par l'ARN polymérase II cellulaire (ARNPII) et est rendue possible par l'interaction directe entre des facteurs de transcription cellulaires et les éléments régulateurs en *cis* situés dans le promoteur du LTR (340). Ces éléments comprennent une boîte TATA non-canonique, trois sites de liaison de la protéine de spécificité 1 (Sp1) en tandem et deux sites de liaison du facteur nucléaire kappa B (NF-κB) hautement conservés et essentiels à la transcription virale (341-344). D'autres facteurs de transcription tels que NFAT, AP1 et plusieurs autres modulent l'activité du promoteur sans toutefois être essentiels à la transcription virale (345, 346). Les ARNm produits sont de pleine longueur (9,2 kb) et doivent éviter la machinerie d'épissage afin de rester ainsi. Ces ARN non-épissés sont les ARNm codant pour les gènes *gag* et *pol* et servent également d'ARN génomique qui sera incorporé dans les nouveaux virions (347, 348). Tous les autres transcrits viraux sont donc le résultat de l'épissage. Trois de ces ARNm sont complètement épissés et codent pour les gènes précoces (*tat*, *rev*, *nef*), tandis que trois autres transcrits sont partiellement épissés (*vif*, *vpr*, *vpu/env*) et codent pour les gènes tardifs (347, 348). Certains mécanismes cellulaires préviennent toutefois l'export nucléaire des ARNm non-épissés et partiellement épissés à cause de la présence d'introns, permettant uniquement l'export des ARNm complètement épissés au début du processus de transcription (133). Les protéines virales Tat, Rev et Nef sont produites en premier lieu par des ribosomes cytoplasmiques et les protéines régulatrices Tat et Rev sont importées dans le noyau via des signaux de localisation nucléaire (NLS) leur permettant de lier une variété d'importines (349-353). L'accumulation de Tat dans le noyau stimule davantage la transcription à partir du LTR par une boucle de rétroaction positive (354-356). Tat se lie à l'élément de réponse à la transactivation (TAR), une structure d'ARN en épingle liée au LTR proviral en aval du site d'initiation de la transcription (357, 358).



Subséquentement, Tat recrute le facteur positif d'élongation de la transcription (P-TEFb), composé de la cycline T1 (CycT1) et de la kinase 9 dépendante de la cycline (CDK9) qui médie l'hyperphosphorylation de la queue C-terminale de l'ARNPII, améliorant ainsi sa processivité et sa capacité d'élongation (358-360). L'export nucléaire des transcrits non-épissés ou partiellement épissés est rendu possible par la protéine Rev qui se multimérise et se lie à la séquence RRE chevauchant le gène *env* et présente dans tous ces ARNm (361, 362). Rev contient un signal d'export nucléaire (NES) qui sert d'adaptateur au complexe CRM1/RanGTP et qui permet le transport actif vers le cytoplasme des ARNm viraux tardifs (363-365). Ceux-ci permettront la production des protéines virales Gag, Gag-Pol, Vif et Vpr par les ribosomes cytoplasmiques ainsi que Vpu et Env par les ribosomes associés au réticulum endoplasmique (366).

Le VIH-1 optimise la capacité codante de son génome en traduisant différentes protéines à partir d'un même ARNm. C'est le cas de l'ARNm bicistronique *vpu/env* qui code à la fois pour les deux protéines transmembranaires du VIH-1 (367, 368). Bien que le gène *env* soit situé en aval de *vpu* dans la séquence de l'ARNm, la traduction d'Env est favorisée puisque le codon d'initiation de Vpu est précédé d'une séquence Kozak faible et qu'il est chevauché par un ORF de six nucléotides dans un cadre de lecture différent, permettant aux ribosomes de court-circuiter le gène *vpu* pour traduire *env* (369, 370). Un autre exemple est le cas de l'ARN génomique qui sert à produire les polyprotéines Gag et Gag-Pol (145). La polyprotéine Gag-Pol, qui est synthétisée dans un ratio de 1:20 par rapport à Gag, est traduite grâce au signal de changement de cadre de lecture (FSS) qui coïncide avec un décalage ribosomal d'un seul nucléotide à la jonction entre *gag* et *pol* (145, 163, 371, 372).

Après sa synthèse par les ribosomes cytoplasmiques, la polyprotéine Pr55<sup>Gag</sup> coordonne l'assemblage des particules virales (373, 374). L'extrémité N-terminale de MA est myristoylée et Gag est ancrée à la membrane cytoplasmique dans des sites riches en phosphatidylinositol-4,5-bisphosphate [PI(4,5)P<sub>2</sub>] et en cholestérol (375-378). Ces régions sont connues sous le nom de microdomaines lipidiques ou « radeaux lipidiques », à partir desquels le bourgeonnement viral se fait, et sont enrichies en cholestérol, en sphingolipides et en protéines ancrées par un groupement glycosylphosphatidylinositol (GPI) (379-381). Le domaine CA favorise la multimérisation de Gag avec l'aide d'IP<sub>6</sub> (272, 382-385) pendant que le domaine p6 permet l'incorporation de Vpr (178,

[386-390](#)) et que le domaine NC conduit l'emballage de l'ARNv génomique dimérique, en interagissant avec la séquence d'encapsulation  $\psi$  ([129](#), [172](#), [391](#)).

Pendant ce temps, le précurseur d'Env de 160 kDa (gp160), une glycoprotéine transmembranaire de type I, est synthétisé à partir de l'ARNm bicistronique *vpu/env*, dans le réticulum endoplasmique rugueux (RER) ([392](#)). La gp160 comprend un peptide signal (PS) à son extrémité N-terminale qui la cible à la membrane du RER, et ce peptide est clivé par les signal peptidases cellulaires après la traduction ([393-396](#)). Le clivage du PS sert de point de contrôle du repliement adéquat de la protéine, qui se fait à l'aide de chaperonnes cellulaires et nécessite la formation de plusieurs ponts disulfures intramoléculaires afin de maintenir sa structure tertiaire ([397-400](#)). La gp160 s'oligomérisent alors sous forme de trimère et subit des modifications post-traductionnelles, majoritairement via la glycosylation de résidus asparagines avec des chaînes latérales d'oligomannoses (N-glycans) ([184](#), [397](#), [401](#)). Ensuite, au cours de son trafic à travers le réseau *trans*-Golgi (TGN), les chaînes latérales d'oligosaccharides sont coupées, des glycans complexes sont ajoutés ([402-404](#)) et les proprotéines convertases cellulaires, telles que la furine et les protéases de type furine, catalysent le clivage protéolytique de la gp160 pour produire les sous-unités fonctionnelles (gp120 et gp41), qui restent associées de manière non covalente ([189](#), [405-410](#)). La furine reconnaît et clive en aval du motif polybasique hautement conservé à la jonction gp120-gp41 (<sup>508</sup>REKR<sup>511</sup>), ce qui libère le peptide de fusion hydrophobe à l'extrémité N-terminale de la gp41 essentiel au processus de fusion virale ([141](#), [182](#), [183](#), [411](#), [412](#)). Suite à sa biosynthèse, Env est transloqué vers la surface cellulaire où elle sera soit incorporée aux virions bourgeonnants, soit rapidement internalisée ([413](#)). La queue cytoplasmique (CT) d'Env contient un motif d'endocytose à base de tyrosine (<sup>712</sup>YXX $\Phi$ <sup>715</sup> ; où X représente n'importe quel acide aminé et  $\Phi$  un acide aminé hydrophobe) qui interagit avec le complexe de protéines adaptatrices de la clathrine 2 (AP-2) ([414](#), [415](#)). L'Env internalisée passe par les compartiments de recyclage endosomaux et est dirigée vers les sites d'assemblage des virions par le complexe Rab11-FIP1C/Rab14 ([416-418](#)). La rétention d'Env dans les plateformes d'assemblage virales est facilitée par un motif d'interaction avec le cholestérol (<sup>679</sup>LWYIK<sup>683</sup>) dans sa région externe proximale à la membrane (MPER), par au moins un site de palmitoylation dans sa CT et par son interaction avec la protéine virale MA ([413](#), [419-424](#)).

La fin du cycle de réplication du virus implique le bourgeonnement et la relâche des virions nouvellement formés. Le domaine p6 à l'extrémité C-terminale de Gag sert d'adaptateur pour recruter la machinerie ESCRT, qui est composée de protéines cellulaires qui aident au processus de scission membranaire ([425-427](#)). Le motif PTAP de p6 interagit avec la protéine TSG101, une composante du complexe ESCRT-I tandis que son motif YPXL se lie à la protéine ALIX, une protéine qui interagit directement avec les complexes ESCRT-I et ESCRT-III ([428-433](#)). Les virions libérés subissent un processus de maturation, qui débute par le clivage autocatalytique du domaine PR de Gag-Pol ([434-436](#)). L'enzyme PR est une protéase aspartique qui s'assemble sous forme d'homodimère, dans lequel le site actif est situé dans une cavité à l'interface du dimère ([437-440](#)). Dans une séquence ordonnée, PR clive des sites prédéfinis dans les polyprotéines Gag et Gag-Pol pour libérer les protéines structurelles MA, CA, SP1, NC, SP2 et p6 ainsi que les enzymes PR, RT et IN ([139](#), [441](#), [442](#)). Le clivage de la PR déclenche des changements morphologiques dans le virion, notamment via la formation d'une capsidie en forme de fullerène conique et par le compactage de l'ARNv, ce qui donne des particules virales infectieuses matures ([142](#), [165](#), [443](#), [444](#)).

#### **1.1.5.4 Facteurs de restriction**

Les facteurs de restriction sont des protéines de l'immunité innée de la cellule hôte qui interfèrent avec des étapes spécifiques du cycle de réplication des virus, bloquant ainsi l'infection. Les facteurs de restriction partagent un certain nombre de caractéristiques et la définition la plus stricte stipule que ce sont des gènes exprimés de manière constitutive, inductible par la réponse interféron de type I (IFN-I) et hautement conservé grâce à une pression sélective positive. Les facteurs de restriction représentent des barrières de transmission inter-espèces, mais ils sont inactifs contre les virus de type sauvage dans leur hôte naturel grâce à l'antagonisme par une protéine accessoire virale ou le recrutement d'un partenaire cellulaire ([445](#)). Il existe quatre facteurs de restriction canoniques connus pour inhiber la réplication du VIH-1: APOBEC3G, TRIM5 $\alpha$ , SAMHD1 et BST-2 ([446-451](#)).

APOBEC3G appartient à une famille d'enzymes de type cytidine désaminases d'ADNs capable d'inhiber l'étape de la transcription inverse ([446](#)). Son mécanisme de restriction débute par son incorporation dans les particules virales via sa multimérisation sur l'ARNv génomique

([452](#), [453](#)). Dans les cellules nouvellement infectées, APOBEC3G provoque un phénomène d'hypermutation du génome pendant la rétrotranscription en catalysant la désamination des cytidines en uridines (C→U) dans l'ADNsb naissant ([454-456](#)). Par conséquent, ce mécanisme d'édition de l'ADN proviral mène à des transitions G→A sur le brin codant qui conduise à l'introduction de substitutions non-synonymes et de codons de terminaison prématurés, pouvant causer des défauts lors de la transcription et de la traduction du provirus ([454](#), [455](#), [457](#), [458](#)). Le locus humain du gène APOBEC3 comporte sept cytidine désaminases (APOBEC3A, -3B, -3C, -3D, -3F, -3G, -3H), certaines ayant également une activité antivirale contre le VIH-1 ([459](#), [460](#)). Les protéines APOBEC3 sont exprimées dans de nombreux types de cellules, notamment dans les cellules hématopoïétiques ([461-463](#)). La protéine accessoire Vif du VIH-1 a évolué pour contrer l'activité antivirale d'APOBEC3G et d'autres membres de la famille APOBEC en induisant leur dégradation par le protéasome, réduisant ainsi leurs niveaux d'incorporation dans les virions nouvellement produits ([459](#), [464-468](#)).

TRIM5 $\alpha$  appartient à une grande famille d'enzyme de type E3 ubiquitine (Ub) ligase et inhibe la réplication du VIH-1 en accélérant le processus de désassemblage de la capsid virale, entravant la transcription inverse et la translocation du génome vers le noyau ([447](#)). Sa topologie comprend entre autres un domaine RING E3 Ub ligase en N-terminal, un domaine de dimérisation central, et un domaine SPRY en C-terminal qui est capable d'interagir avec la capsid du VIH-1 ([469-472](#)). Donc, TRIM5 $\alpha$  cause le désassemblage prématuré de la capsid dans le cytoplasme en s'y liant directement via son domaine SPRY et en se multimérisant pour former une vaste structure hexagonale ([473-475](#)). TRIM5 $\alpha$  recrute ensuite la machinerie d'ubiquitination permettant la dégradation de la capsid par le protéasome ([476-478](#)). À cause d'une certaine redondance génique, TRIM5 $\alpha$  peut également former des hétéro-oligomères avec d'autres protéines de la famille TRIM et conserver son activité antivirale ([479-481](#)). Or, en plus de stabiliser la capsid virale lors de l'infection, le recrutement de CypA protège également de la restriction par TRIM5 $\alpha$  en compétitionnant pour la liaison à CA ([482](#), [483](#)). Fait intéressant, chez plusieurs espèces de singes, le domaine SPRY de TRIM5 $\alpha$  a été remplacé par un domaine de cyclophiline A (TRIM-CypA), ce qui lui confère une résistance accrue à l'infection par le VIH-1 ([484-490](#)).

SAMHD1 est une dNTP hydrolase présente dans le noyau qui entrave également la transcription inverse du VIH-1 en réduisant le pool de dNTPs intracellulaire disponible ([448](#), [491](#), [492](#)). L'activité de SAMHD1 est inhibée par la phosphorylation de son résidu T592 par les kinases CDK1/2 pendant l'initiation de la phase S du cycle cellulaire ([493](#), [494](#)) et déphosphorylée par la phosphatase PP2A à la fin de la phase M ([495](#)). La phosphorylation de SAMHD1 peut notamment être augmentée par les cytokines de type  $\gamma$ c comme l'interleukine-2 (IL-2), l'IL-7 et l'IL-15 qui régulent la prolifération homéostatique des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> ([496](#), [497](#)). La protéine accessoire Vpx du VIH-2 est connue pour sa capacité à induire la dégradation de SAMHD1 par le protéasome ([449](#)). Du côté du VIH-1, il ne possède pas de gène encodant pour Vpx, mais pourrait compenser ce manque en induisant un arrêt du cycle cellulaire en phase G2/M par Vpr et en dégradant PP2A par l'entremise de Vif, afin de piéger SAMHD1 dans son état phosphorylé ([498-504](#)). SAMHD1 est exprimé de façon ubiquitaire dans les cellules myéloïdes et lymphocytaires, mais confère une résistance au VIH-1 uniquement dans les cellules différenciées terminales (e.g. cellule dendritique) ou quiescentes (e.g. lymphocyte T naïf) qui sont dans la phase G0/G1 ([505-507](#)).

BST-2, aussi connue comme tétherine, est une protéine transmembranaire qui ancre les particules virales bourgeonnantes à la surface des cellules infectées, empêchant la relâche du virus ([450](#), [451](#)). Cette fonction est assurée par sa topologie unique, avec la présence d'un domaine transmembranaire en N-terminal, de cystéines dans son domaine extracellulaire permettant sa dimérisation, et d'une ancre lipidique GPI en C-terminal, qui permet de fixer une extrémité de la protéine à la membrane plasmique et l'autre à la membrane virale ([508](#), [509](#)). BST-2 exerce une activité antivirale contre un large spectre de virus enveloppés ([510-521](#)). Notamment, les lentivirus de primates ont évolué vers trois protéines virales différentes pour échapper à la restriction de BST-2. La protéine Vpu du VIH-1 surmonte la restriction du BST-2 humain par sa séquestration dans le TGN et les compartiments endosomaux et la promotion de sa dégradation par le protéasome et les lysosomes ([522-530](#)). Les glycoprotéines d'Env du VIH-2 et de souches de SIV reliées sont également capables d'antagoniser BST-2 via une interaction entre leurs domaines transmembranaires respectifs ([531-534](#)). Pour la plupart des SIV, la protéine Nef cible une séquence dans la queue cytoplasmique de BST-2 simien favorisant son endocytose et sa dégradation lysosomale ([535](#)). Comme le BST-2 humain est dépourvu de cette séquence, cela lui

confère une résistance à l'antagonisme du Nef encodé par les différentes souches de SIV ([536-538](#)). Le gène *bst2* possède un codon d'initiation alternatif permettant la génération d'une isoforme courte résistante à Vpu, ayant une troncature de 12 acides aminés dans sa queue cytoplasmique par rapport à son isoforme longue ([539, 540](#)). De son côté, l'isoforme longue de BST-2 possède la capacité d'induire l'activation de la cascade de signalisation pro-inflammatoire NF-κB via la détection de virions attachés à la surface cellulaire, dévoilant une fonction supplémentaire de BST-2 en tant que senseur viral dans l'immunité innée au-delà de son activité de restriction ([541, 542](#)). L'activation de la voie NF-κB par BST-2 est également abrogée par Vpu ([543, 544](#)). En plus d'être augmenté par les IFN-I, BST-2 peut également être induit par l'IL-27 via des voies de signalisation JAK-STAT redondantes dans les cellules myéloïdes et les lymphocytes T ([545](#)).

Dans le domaine de la recherche sur le VIH-1, les modèles de primates non-humains (NHP), comme le macaque, sont largement utilisés pour mimer l'infection par le VIH-1 ([115](#)). Comme le VIH-1 est incapable d'antagoniser les quatre facteurs de restriction principaux chez le macaque, l'utilisation de ce modèle d'infection nécessite l'utilisation de constructions virales hybrides, appelées virus de l'immunodéficience humaine et simienne (SHIV) ([447, 526, 536, 546-548](#)). Ces virus sont typiquement composés d'une souche de SIVmac où l'on substitue uniquement le segment génique *env* du VIH-1 afin d'obtenir une infection productive ([549](#)).

#### **1.1.5.5 Facteurs de résistance**

De surcroît, il existe également plusieurs facteurs de résistance cellulaires capables d'inhiber un large éventail de processus du cycle de réplication du VIH-1, sans toutefois remplir tous les critères pour être considérés comme des facteurs de restriction. Le fait que les IFN-I inhibent fortement la réplication du VIH-1 suggère la présence de facteurs antiviraux additionnels provenant des gènes induits par l'IFN (ISG) ([550-555](#)). Les protéines de la famille IFITM (IFITM1, IFITM2, IFITM3) et de la famille GBP (GBP2, GBP5) sont connues pour interférer avec l'entrée virale du VIH-1 ([556, 557](#)). Les IFITMs affectent à la fois la biosynthèse d'Env dans la cellule infectée productrice et le processus de fusion dans la cellule cible ([558-561](#)). GBP2/5 sont des inhibiteurs de la furine cellulaire, affectant également la synthèse de trimère d'Env fonctionnels ([562, 563](#)). L'activité antivirale de ces deux familles de protéines peut être surmontée par le VIH-1 par des mutations d'Env ou en augmentant l'expression d'Env, respectivement ([564-566](#)).

Ensuite, il y a la protéine MX2 qui est capable de bloquer l'import nucléaire du PIC par sa liaison à la capsid virale et par une potentielle compétition pour la liaison à la protéine Nup153 du panier du NPC (321, 567-572). Les protéines ZAP et SLFN11 sont des facteurs antiviraux posant des contraintes au niveau de la séquence du génome viral et affectant les étapes tardives de transcription et de traduction (573-575). ZAP est une polymérase d'ADP-ribose capable de reconnaître et cliver les ARNm contenant des îlots de dinucléotides CpG (576-580), tandis que SLFN11 digère certains ARNt de type II (573, 581). Le VIH-1 est capable d'échapper à ces deux facteurs par la limitation du contenu en nucléotides CG et par une utilisation biaisée de certains codons dans son génome (582, 583). Outre les ISGs, il existe également des facteurs de résistance intrinsèques exprimés de manière constitutive qui inhibent la réplication du VIH-1. Les protéines SERINC3 et SERINC5 sont incorporées au niveau de la particule virale et réduisent l'efficacité de l'entrée virale (584-587). Cette famille de protéines à dix passages transmembranaires, une caractéristique typique des enzymes de type flippase, jouerait potentiellement un rôle visant à réduire l'exposition des phosphatidylsérines sur le feuillet externe de la membrane virale, ce qui est essentiel au processus de fusion (253, 588, 589). Les lentivirus de primates (HIV-1, HIV-2 et SIVs) utilisent la protéine accessoire Nef afin d'exclure SERINC3 et SERINC5 des virions bourgeonnants (590, 591). Les protéines TIMs possèdent un domaine pouvant se lier aux phosphatidylsérines de la membrane virale et ainsi limiter la relâche virale dans un mécanisme indépendant de BST-2 (209). Cependant, le VIH-1 régule négativement les niveaux de surface de cette famille de protéines en utilisant les protéines accessoire Vpu pour cibler TIM-3 et Nef pour cibler TIM-1 (592, 593). Malgré la présence d'une variété de facteurs antiviraux cellulaires, le VIH-1 a évolué de sorte qu'il puisse contrecarrer ces mécanismes de défense et répliquer efficacement dans les cellules hôtes.

### 1.1.6 Protéines accessoires

Les protéines accessoires du VIH-1 (Vif, Vpr, Vpu, Nef) ne sont pas nécessaires à la réplication du VIH-1 *in vitro*, mais sont essentielles pour la réplication virale efficace *in vivo*. Les protéines accessoires manipulent de nombreuses voies et processus cellulaires pour créer un environnement propice à la réplication virale, en surmontant les mécanismes de défense antiviraux de l'immunité innée et adaptative. Ces petites protéines polyvalentes se servent des complexes de protéines adaptatrices de clathrine (Nef, Vpu) et de la machinerie d'ubiquitination (Vif, Vpr, Vpu),

afin d'induire la relocalisation ou la dégradation par le protéasome ou les lysosomes d'une grande variété de facteurs cellulaires.

#### 1.1.6.1 Vif

Vif est une protéine cytoplasmique de 23 kDa qui est exprimée tard dans le cycle de réplication virale. Vif joue un rôle prépondérant dans la pathogenèse lentivirale *in vivo* puisque son absence empêche complètement la réplication virale dans les modèles d'infection de NHP ou de souris humanisées ([594-597](#)). La principale fonction de Vif est d'antagoniser les facteurs de restriction de la famille APOBEC3 pour assurer la production de virus infectieux ([446](#)). Vif interagit directement avec APOBEC3G et recrute le complexe E3 Ub ligase ELOC/ELOB/CUL5/RBX2 pour polyubiquitiner APOBEC3G, ce qui conduit à sa dégradation par le protéasome ([467](#), [598-601](#)). Ce processus nécessite également le cofacteur cellulaire non-canonique CBF $\beta$  pour stabiliser Vif et son assemblage avec la E3 Ub ligase ([602-607](#)). Certaines fonctions secondaires de Vif incluent l'induction d'un arrêt du cycle cellulaire en phase G2/M par la dégradation de plusieurs complexes régulateurs hétérotrimériques de la phosphatase PP2A (PPP2R5) ([501-504](#), [608](#)), l'inhibition de l'autophagie ([609](#)) et l'inhibition de la réponse interféron ([610-612](#)).

#### 1.1.6.2 Vpr

Vpr est une protéine nucléaire de 14 kDa dont la fonction est la plus énigmatique. Sa présence semble jouer un rôle plus prépondérant dans l'infection de cellules myéloïdes et sa délétion *in vivo* atténue modestement la pathogenèse du virus ([613-617](#)). Vpr interagit avec DCAF1, un adaptateur permettant de recruter le complexe E3 Ub ligase DCAF1/DDB1/CUL4A/RBX1 ([618-622](#)). Le recrutement de la E3 Ub ligase par Vpr a différents effets biologiques, notamment l'induction d'un arrêt du cycle cellulaire en phase G2/M des cellules infectées et l'activation de la voie des dommages à l'ADN médiée par ATR ([498-500](#), [623](#), [624](#)), ce qui mène à la reprogrammation du transcriptome de la cellule infectée et l'augmentation de l'activité transcriptionnelle du promoteur du LTR ([625-629](#)). Ce processus active les mécanismes d'apoptose cellulaire qui sont également contrecarrés par Vpr ([630-633](#)). Une conséquence connue de l'activation de la voie des dommages à l'ADN est d'accroître la sensibilité des cellules infectées à la destruction par les cellules NK en induisant l'expression de ligands de stress à la surface des



cellules infectées (634-636). De nombreuses protéines cellulaires jouant un rôle dans les différentes voies de réparation de l'ADN, y compris la glycosylase d'uracile UNG2 (637, 638), le complexe SLX4 (639, 640), l'hélicase HLTf (327, 641, 642), l'exonucléase EXO1 (643), ont été signalées comme étant dégradées par Vpr, mais n'ayant que peu d'effet sur le cycle cellulaire et l'expression génique (644, 645). La récente identification du facteur CCDC137 comme cible cellulaire dégradée par Vpr pourrait être la pièce manquante puisque sa déplétion récapitule entièrement le phénotype induit par Vpr (644, 646).

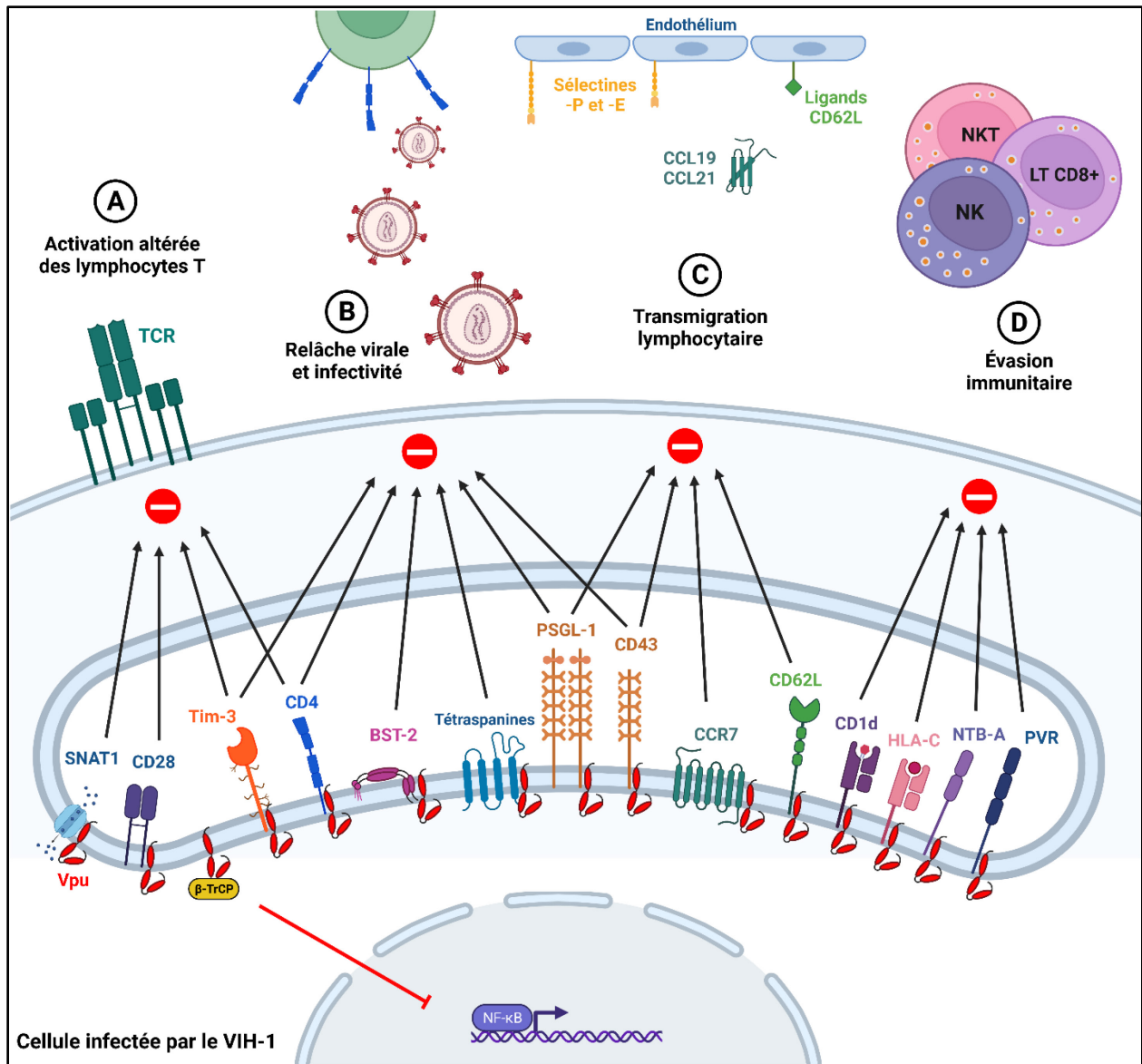
### 1.1.6.3 Vpu

Vpu est une protéine transmembranaire de 16 kDa produite à partir d'un ARNm bicistronique codant également pour Env, ce qui suggère que l'expression de Vpu et d'Env est coordonnée pendant l'infection par le VIH-1 (151, 153, 367, 368). L'expression de Vpu est spécifique au VIH-1 et aux SIV apparentés, incluant ses précurseurs SIVcpz et SIVgor, ainsi que les ancêtres du SIVcpz (SIVgsn/mon/mus/den) (109, 647-651). Sa topologie consiste en un court peptide luminal en N-terminal, un domaine transmembranaire sous forme d'hélice  $\alpha$  inclinée à 25° et d'un domaine cytoplasmique hydrophile composé de deux hélices  $\alpha$  amphiphiles partiellement enfouies dans la membrane lipidique (652). Les hélices 2 et 3 sont connectées par une boucle flexible comportant une séquence hautement conservée (<sup>51</sup>DSGNES<sup>56</sup>), qui comprend une paire de sérines (S52 et S56) qui sont phosphorylées par la caséine kinase II (CKII) (653-656). Ce motif de phosphosérine interagit avec l'adaptateur  $\beta$ -TrCP, qui permet le recrutement de la E3 Ub ligase  $\beta$ -TrCP/SKP1/CUL1/RBX1 (SCF <sup>$\beta$ -TrCP</sup>) (657, 658). L'hélice 3 comporte également un motif d'endocytose dileucine non-classique (<sup>59</sup>EXXXLV<sup>64</sup>) lui permettant de lier le complexe de protéines adaptatrices de clathrine AP-1 (659-661). Vpu se localise principalement dans des compartiments intracellulaires, notamment, le réticulum endoplasmique (RE), le TGN et les endosomes (522, 654, 662, 663).

La protéine Vpu du VIH-1 possède deux fonctions principales : l'augmentation de l'infectivité des virions par la dégradation du récepteur CD4 (664) et l'augmentation de la relâche des virions par l'antagonisme du facteur de restriction BST-2 (450, 451). Des modèles d'infection *in vivo* ont confirmé le rôle de Vpu dans la promotion de la réplication virale dans la phase initiale de l'infection et de la persistance de la virémie à long terme grâce à sa capacité à réguler

négativement CD4 et BST-2 ([665-669](#)). En ciblant le CD4 nouvellement synthétisé, Vpu prévient la formation de complexes Env-CD4 dans le RE, ce qui pourrait affecter la stabilité, la maturation, le trafic et l'incorporation de Env vers les sites d'assemblage viraux ([670](#)). La dégradation de CD4 médiée par Vpu est initiée par l'interaction entre l'hélice 2 de Vpu et une hélice  $\alpha$  située dans la région proximale à la membrane dans la queue cytoplasmique du CD4 ([671-678](#)), suivi de la polyubiquitination de CD4 par la E3 Ub ligase SCF <sup>$\beta$ -TrCP</sup> ([657](#), [679](#), [680](#)). La polyubiquitination de CD4 favorise le recrutement du complexe de dislocase VCP-UFD1L-NPL4 de la voie de dégradation associée au RE (ERAD), qui permet l'extraction du CD4 de la membrane et son acheminement au protéasome pour sa dégradation ([679](#), [681](#), [682](#)). De son côté, le mécanisme par lequel Vpu antagonise BST-2 est associé à une réduction des niveaux de BST-2 à la surface cellulaire en ciblant le BST-2 nouvellement synthétisé ou recyclé vers la membrane cytoplasmique ([530](#), [683](#)). Vpu et BST-2 interagissent directement par l'intermédiaire de leurs domaines transmembranaires respectifs, ce qui dépend d'un sillon hydrophobe formé par les résidus A10, A14, A18 et W22 dans l'hélice transmembranaire de Vpu ([684](#), [685](#)). Le BST-2 est ensuite séquestré dans le TGN et les compartiments endosomaux riches en clathrine grâce au recrutement du complexe AP-1 ([522](#), [527](#), [659](#)). En induisant la polyubiquitination de la queue cytoplasmique de BST-2, Vpu redirige BST-2 vers une voie de dégradation endosomale dépendante des ESCRTs qui se termine par sa dégradation dans les lysosomes ([523](#), [525](#), [686-688](#)).

En plus de CD4 et BST-2, Vpu module à la baisse une variété de protéines cellulaires transmembranaires à l'aide de son domaine transmembranaire ou de ses partenaires cellulaires afin d'améliorer l'efficacité du cycle de réplication viral et la survie des cellules infectées (**Figure 1.1.6**). D'abord, la régulation négative du récepteur de phosphatidylsérine TIM-3 est un autre mécanisme par lequel Vpu augmente la relâche virale ([209](#), [593](#)). La capacité de Vpu à augmenter l'infectivité des virions passe également par l'exclusion de PSGL-1 et CD43, des protéines hautement glycosylées empêchant l'attachement à la surface des cellules cibles ([689-691](#)), ainsi que les tétraspanines, une famille de molécules affectant le processus de fusion ([692-695](#)). Ensuite, Vpu est capable d'altérer l'activation des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> infectées en ciblant des cofacteurs du récepteur des lymphocytes T (TCR) comme CD4, CD28 et TIM-3 ([593](#), [696-698](#)), en dégradant le transporteur d'alanine SNAT1, important pour l'immunométabolisme des cellules en prolifération ([699](#)), et en interrompant la voie de signalisation NF- $\kappa$ B, par son antagonisme de



**Figure 1.1.6 - Fonctions de Vpu dans les cellules infectées par le VIH-1**

Par sa capacité à recruter les protéines adaptatrices de clathrine et une E3 ubiquitine ligase, Vpu est capable de cibler une vaste gamme de protéines cellulaires transmembranaires dans les différents compartiments de la voie de sécrétion. (A) Vpu peut interférer avec l'activation des lymphocytes T infectés en interférant avec la voie de signalisation du TCR (NF-κB), des cofacteurs du TCR (CD4, CD28, TIM-3) ou l'immunométabolisme (SNAT1). (B) Vpu augmente aussi la relâche virale (BST-2, TIM-3) et l'infectivité des particules virales relâchées (CD4, PSGL-1, CD43 et les tétraspanines). (C) Une autre de ses fonctions est de bloquer la migration trans-endothéliale lymphocytaire vers les tissus (PSGL-1, CD43, CCR7, CD62L). (D) Finalement, Vpu joue un rôle dans l'évasion immunitaire des cellules infectées en régulant négativement les ligands de récepteurs activateurs des cellules NKT (CD1d), lymphocytes T [LT] CD8<sup>+</sup> (HLA-C) et cellules NK (NTB-A, PVR). Diagramme créé avec [BioRender.com](https://www.biorender.com/).

BST-2 et par la séquestration de la protéine adaptatrice  $\beta$ -TrCP, ce qui empêche la dégradation de I $\kappa$ B ([540](#), [543](#), [544](#), [700](#), [701](#)). D'autre part, Vpu prévient la migration trans-endothéliale vers les tissus en ciblant le récepteur de chimiokine CCR7, nécessaire au « homing » des cellules vers les ganglions lymphatiques via un gradient chimiotactique de CCL19 et CCL21 ([702](#), [703](#)), et en inhibant l'exposition de surface de la sélectine-L (CD62L) et des ligands pour la sélectine-P et la sélectine-E (PSGL-1, CD43), des molécules d'adhésion importantes pour le processus de roulement sur l'endothélium ([704-706](#)). Finalement, Vpu contribue à l'évasion de différentes réponses immunitaires innées et adaptatives notamment en modulant à la baisse les ligands des récepteurs activateurs des cellules NK (NTB-A, PVR), des cellules NKT (CD1d) et des cellules T CD8<sup>+</sup> cytotoxiques (HLA-C) ([707-713](#)).

#### 1.1.6.4 Nef

Nef est une protéine de 27 kDa produite à partir de transcriptions virales précoces ([133](#), [714](#)). Nef joue un rôle important dans la pathogenèse du VIH-1 en favorisant la réplication et la propagation virales *in vivo* et en permettant l'évasion immunitaire des cellules infectées. Les patients infectés par le VIH-1 portant des gènes *nef* mutants ou défectueux présentent une progression de la maladie beaucoup plus lente ([715-721](#)). De même, les modèles de NHP et de souris humanisées infectés par un lentivirus n'exprimant pas Nef développent de faibles charges virales et ne développent pas le SIDA ([722-725](#)). De manière remarquable, l'expression de Nef induit à elle seule un syndrome semblable au SIDA chez des souris transgéniques, ce qui suggère un rôle direct de Nef dans la pathogenèse du VIH-1 ([726-729](#)). Nef est une protéine cytoplasmique dont l'extrémité N-terminale est myristoylée ce qui permet son association avec la membrane plasmique et son incorporation dans les virions ([730-732](#)). La topologie de Nef consiste en une région flexible en N-terminale servant de commutateur moléculaire, un noyau globulaire et une longue boucle flexible permettant la liaison aux complexes adaptateurs de clathrine AP-1 et AP-2, via un motif dileucine (<sup>160</sup>EXXXLL<sup>165</sup>) hautement conservé en C-terminale ([733-736](#)).

Tout comme Vpu, Nef interfère avec le trafic intracellulaire d'une multitude de protéines de l'hôte, ses principales fonctions étant la régulation négative de l'expression de surface du récepteur CD4 ([737](#)) et du complexe majeur d'histocompatibilité de classe I (CMH-I) ([738](#)). Contrairement à Vpu, Nef cible les molécules de CD4 déjà présentes à la surface des cellules

infectées et induit leur endocytose par les puits de clathrine en liant la queue cytoplasmique de CD4 et en recrutant le complexe AP-2 ([736](#), [739-745](#)). Le CD4 internalisé est ensuite redirigé vers les lysosomes pour être dégradé grâce à son transport rétrograde par les vésicules COPI ([746](#), [747](#)). La régulation négative de CD4 par Nef permet de prévenir la surinfection de la cellule, d'améliorer la relâche et l'infectivité des particules virales bourgeonnantes et d'évader la réponse anticorps non-neutralisante ([748-759](#)). D'une manière similaire à CD4, Nef entraîne également la régulation négative des facteurs de résistance SERINC3 et SERINC5 via le recrutement du complexe AP-2 afin d'améliorer l'infectivité virale ([584](#), [585](#), [760](#), [761](#)). Afin d'évader la réponse immunitaire à médiation cellulaire, Nef limite la présentation antigénique en modulant à la baisse les molécules classiques du CMH-I, soit HLA-A et HLA-B, afin de protéger les cellules infectées de la reconnaissance par les lymphocytes T CD8<sup>+</sup> cytotoxiques (CTL) ([738](#), [762](#)). Cette spécificité de Nef est dictée par la présence d'un résidu tyrosine dans la queue cytoplasmique des molécules du CMH-I, absent chez HLA-C, mais présent chez HLA-A, HLA-B, HLA-E et CD1d ([763-767](#)). Contrairement à CD4, Nef interfère avec le trafic intracellulaire des molécules du CMH-I nouvellement synthétisées via le recrutement du complexe AP-1 à l'aide son motif dileucine et le remodelage de son noyau globulaire afin d'accommoder la queue cytoplasmique du CMH-I ([768-772](#)). À l'instar de CD4, les molécules du CMH-I transitent par les vésicules COPI pour être finalement dégradées dans les lysosomes ([738](#), [747](#)). De plus, Nef module à la baisse l'expression de plusieurs molécules du CMH-I non-classiques telles que ULBP1, ULBP2 et MICA, qui agissent comme ligands du récepteur activateur NKG2D, afin de protéger les cellules infectées de l'élimination par les cellules NK ([773](#), [774](#)). En plus du récepteur CD4 et des molécules du CMH-I, les fonctions complémentaires de Nef et Vpu permettent de cibler plusieurs autres substrats de manière redondante, notamment CD28, CD62L, CD1d, PVR et les tétraspanines ([693](#), [696](#), [704](#), [708](#), [764](#), [765](#)). Nef semble également impliquer dans d'autres processus cellulaires incluant l'altération des voies de signalisation NFAT et NF-κB ([543](#), [775-778](#)), la répression de l'autophagie ([779](#), [780](#)) et la sécrétion de vésicules extracellulaires ([781](#), [782](#)).

### **1.1.7 Pathogénèse du VIH-1**

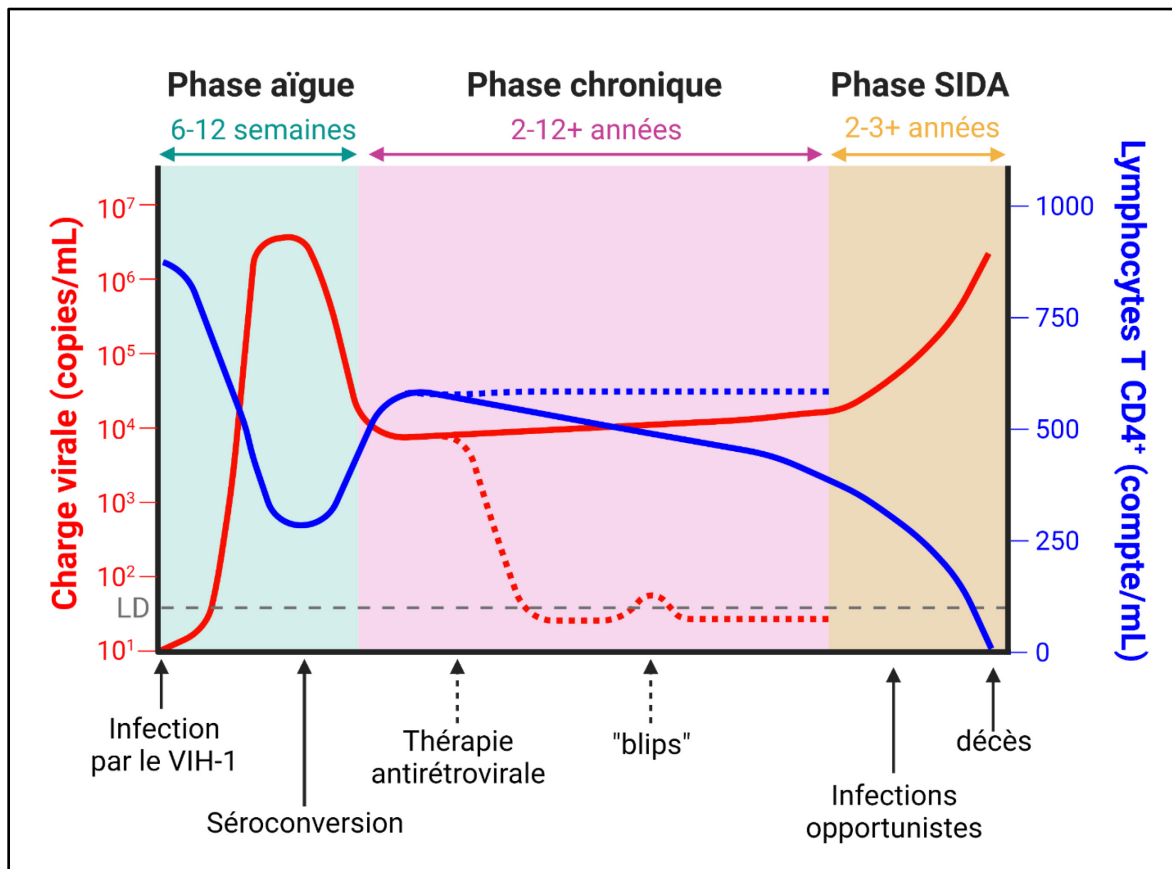
La transmission du VIH-1 résulte d'un contact direct avec les fluides corporels d'une personne infectée, notamment le sang, les fluides vaginaux, les fluides pré-séminaux, le sperme, les fluides rectaux et le lait maternel. Les principales sources de transmission sont les rapports

sexuels non protégés et le virus est transmis par les voies génitales ou la muqueuse rectale. Les autres formes de transmission comprennent la transmission de la mère à l'enfant pendant la grossesse et l'allaitement, les transfusions sanguines et le partage d'aiguilles ou de seringues (783). Bien que l'inoculum lors de la transmission contienne un mélange de quasi-espèces de VIH-1 génétiquement diverses, l'initiation de l'infection commence généralement à partir d'un seul virus appelé « virus transmis fondateur » (T/F) (257). Ces virus T/F présentent généralement un tropisme CCR5, une infection préférentielle des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup>, une infectivité et une capacité de réplication accrues, une résistance aux IFN-I et des glycoprotéines Env possédant des boucles variables plus courtes et moins de sites de N-glycosylation (257, 564, 784-794). Une fois l'infection établie, la manifestation clinique de l'infection par le VIH-1 non-traitée peut être décrite en trois grandes étapes : la phase aiguë, la phase chronique et la phase SIDA (**Figure 1.1.7**).

#### **1.1.7.1 Phases de l'infection**

La phase aiguë (également appelée primo-infection) dure quelques semaines après l'exposition au virus. La période initiale entre le moment où la première cellule est infectée et celui où le virus est détectable pour la première fois dans le sang est appelée la phase d'éclipse et dure environ 1 à 3 semaines (795-800). Pendant cette phase silencieuse, le virus se propage dans les lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> des muqueuses et des ganglions lymphatiques drainants (801). Une fois que la charge virale devient détectable dans le plasma sanguin, elle augmente de manière exponentielle pour atteindre plusieurs millions de copies par millilitre (mL) en raison de la réplication du virus dans les tissus lymphoïdes associés à l'intestin (GALT) et dans le sang périphérique, ce qui cause une déplétion significative des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> dans ces tissus (802-809). L'infection primaire déclenche également la réponse immunitaire adaptative par la libération de cytokines pro-inflammatoires, ce qui permet un certain contrôle de la charge virale et la récupération partielle des niveaux de lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> en périphérie (810-812). L'apparition séquentielle de marqueurs viraux et immunitaires quantifiables dans le sang a permis l'établissement d'un système de classification des différents stades de l'infection aiguë appelés « stades Fiebig » (813). Suite à la détection de l'ARN viral (Fiebig I), on détecte séquentiellement l'apparition l'antigène de capsid (Fiebig II) et d'anticorps spécifiques au VIH-1, appelée la séroconversion, détectable par ELISA (Fiebig III) ou par immunobuvardage de type Western (Fiebig IV, V et VI) (813). C'est pendant cette phase précoce que les réservoirs viraux sont rapidement établis (814-816).

L'infection progresse ensuite vers une phase chronique asymptomatique de durée variable (2 à 12 ans) qui se caractérise par une virémie plasmatique relativement stable et qui voit la population virale homogène entrer dans une phase de diversification (817, 818). Cela s'accompagne d'une perte d'intégrité de la muqueuse gastro-intestinale et de la translocation microbienne, ce qui contribue à l'induction d'une réponse inflammatoire persistante et d'une activation immunitaire chronique, qui sont associées à leur tour à la progression de la maladie et à la déplétion des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> infectés et non-infectés (819-822).



**Figure 1.1.7 - Stades de l'infection par le VIH-1.**

La manifestation clinique de l'infection typique par le VIH-1 peut être séparée en plusieurs phases : la phase aiguë où la virémie atteint son paroxysme et le nombre de lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> diminue de manière drastique, la phase chronique où la charge virale et les niveaux de lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> se stabilisent et la phase SIDA où l'individu subit une perte accélérée des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> et une augmentation importante de la virémie, ce qui mène au décès à la suite d'infections opportunistes. La réponse immunitaire adaptative et la séroconversion arrivent vers de la fin de la phase aiguë et permet une certaine réduction de la virémie et la récupération de comptes de lymphocyte T CD4<sup>+</sup> plus élevés. L'utilisation de la thérapie antirétrovirale permet de garder des taux stables de lymphocytes CD4<sup>+</sup> et une virémie indétectable, malgré la présence de « blips » occasionnels (823). LD : limite de détection. Figure inspirée de (824). Diagramme créé avec [BioRender.com](https://www.biorender.com).

Différents mécanismes ont été décrits pour expliquer la déplétion des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup>, notamment les effets cytopathiques directs du virus via la formation de syncytia ou l'induction de l'apoptose, ou encore leur élimination par les cellules NK et les lymphocytes T CD8<sup>+</sup> cytotoxiques ([825-827](#)). Cependant, la déplétion des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> ne se limite pas seulement aux cellules infectées et serait majoritairement due à l'élimination de cellules non-infectées ([828](#)). Plusieurs protéines virales dont la gp120 soluble peuvent être libérées dans la circulation et induire l'apoptose ou la pyroptose des cellules non-infectées en se liant aux récepteurs de surface ou par absorption intracellulaire ([829-833](#)). La liaison de la gp120 soluble au CD4 présent à la surface des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> non-infectées permet également leur reconnaissance par les anticorps présents dans le sérum des personnes infectées, ce qui peut mener à leur élimination par les cellules effectrices du système immunitaire ([834](#)).

Au cours du dernier stade clinique de l'infection, le SIDA, le décès des personnes infectées est associé au développement de cancers et d'infections opportunistes en raison de l'effondrement du système immunitaire. Cliniquement, un individu infecté par le VIH-1 progresse vers la phase SIDA lorsque le nombre de lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> est inférieur à 200 cellules par microlitre (μL) et que la charge virale remonte, ce qui est habituellement dû à l'apparition de virus à tropisme CXCR4 ([835-837](#)). L'utilisation de la thérapie antirétrovirale permet de contrôler la charge virale à des niveaux indétectables et de stabiliser les comptes de lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> chez la majorité des individus infectés, freinant ainsi la progression vers la phase SIDA ([838](#), [839](#)). Un sous-ensemble représentant environ 5% des personnes infectées par le VIH-1, appelées « non-progresseur à long terme » (LTNP), est capable de maintenir des niveaux de lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> stables et une faible virémie plasmatique en absence d'ART ([840](#)). Il existe également une minorité d'individus infectés (moins de 1%), appelés contrôleurs élites, qui peuvent supprimer la virémie à des niveaux indétectables, préserver un taux élevé de lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup>, et passer des décennies sans traitement sans jamais évoluer vers la phase SIDA ([841](#)). Ce groupe de patients exceptionnels, somme toute très hétérogène, est actuellement à l'étude comme modèle de guérison fonctionnelle de l'infection par le VIH-1 ([842-847](#)).



### 1.1.7.2 Réservoirs

Bien que la déplétion sélective des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> soit l'une des caractéristiques principales de l'infection par le VIH-1, certaines cellules infectées avec de l'ADN proviral intégré réussissent à survivre, et ce, même en présence d'ART (848). Plusieurs facteurs biologiques permettent la persistance de ces cellules qui forme le réservoir viral, soit leur localisation anatomique, leur susceptibilité à l'infection, leur durée de vie, leur état d'activation ainsi que la latence virale. Une cartographie détaillée de la distribution du VIH-1 dans l'organisme a permis de constater un enrichissement du virus dans les ganglions lymphatiques et de manière prédominante dans le GALT, bien que le virus puisse être détecté dans à peu près tous les organes du corps (849-854). Dans l'état d'inflammation chronique de l'infection par le VIH-1, des centres germinatifs se forment dans les follicules de lymphocytes B au sein des structures lymphoïdes afin de générer une réponse humorale (855). Ces structures contiennent des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> folliculaires auxiliaires (T<sub>FH</sub>) activés, hautement susceptibles à l'infection, mais excluent activement la présence de cellules effectrices, offrant ainsi au virus un sanctuaire immunitaire favorisant la réplication (851, 856-860). Les testicules et le cerveau comptent également parmi les sanctuaires immunitaires potentiels du VIH-1 (861, 862). En plus de l'absence de cellules effectrices, la pénétration sous-optimale des médicaments antiviraux dans ces mêmes tissus est un autre facteur pouvant contribuer à la persistance des réservoirs (863-865). Au niveau cellulaire, les réservoirs sont particulièrement enrichis chez les lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> mémoires à longue durée de vie qui sont retrouvés en circulation (T<sub>CM</sub>, T<sub>TM</sub>, T<sub>EM</sub> et T<sub>SCM</sub>) ou qui résident dans les tissus (T<sub>RM</sub>), ces derniers dérivant majoritairement des lymphocytes Th17 présents dans la lamina propria de l'intestin (866-875). La susceptibilité accrue des lymphocytes Th17 est caractérisée par un certain niveau constant d'activation et d'un niveau élevé d'expression du corécepteur CCR5 et de l'intégrine  $\alpha 4\beta 7$  (259, 876-886). En plus de la longue durée de vie des lymphocytes T mémoires, la persistance du réservoir est assurée par une expansion clonale massive et soutenue des cellules infectées via trois mécanismes principaux: l'intégration du provirus dans les gènes associés à la croissance cellulaire, la prolifération homéostatique et la prolifération induite par la spécificité antigénique du TCR (866, 887-895). En plus des cellules actives sur le plan réplcatif, il existe également un pool de cellules infectées de manière latente, comportant un provirus intégré intact, peu actif sur le plan transcriptionnel et ne produisant pas de virions infectieux, mais ayant la capacité de le faire après stimulation (848, 896-901). Le phénomène de latence est multifactoriel

et peut être affecté notamment par l'expression de molécules de point de contrôle immunitaire (PD-1, CTLA-4, LAG3, TIGIT, TIM-3) ([851](#), [902-905](#)), et par des modifications épigénétiques provoquant l'extinction transcriptionnelle de l'ADN proviral par le compactage de la chromatine ([906-915](#)).

Bien que le VIH-1 puisse infecter d'autres types cellulaires comme les macrophages, monocytes et cellules dendritiques, la présence d'un réservoir viral dans les cellules myéloïdes reste un sujet controversé et peu étudié comparativement aux lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup>. Malgré la présence de macrophages tissulaires à longue durée de vie, les présentes études suggèrent un apport minimal de ces cellules à la persistance virale ([916-918](#)). Au final, l'incapacité du système immunitaire et du traitement ART à éliminer le réservoir viral hétérogène reste un des problèmes majeurs à l'éradication du VIH-1 de l'organisme et nécessite l'élaboration de stratégies de guérison novatrices afin de résoudre ce casse-tête.

## **1.2 Réponses immunitaires contre l'infection par le VIH-1**

La réponse immunitaire contre le VIH-1 consiste en une réponse innée qui est peu spécifique, mais qui sert de première ligne de défense protégeant l'hôte contre le virus, sans aucune exposition préalable. Ces premiers mécanismes antiviraux sont orchestrés en grande partie par les IFN-I, qui induisent un état antiviral chez les cellules cibles par l'induction de gènes codant pour des facteurs de restriction et de résistance au virus. Celle-ci est suivie de la réponse adaptative qui est hautement spécifique et implique le recrutement de cellules effectrices capable d'éliminer les cellules infectées directement grâce à la reconnaissance d'anomalies à la surface cellulaire (réponse à médiation cellulaire) ou par le biais d'anticorps capables de neutraliser le virus et de recruter les cellules effectrices exprimant les récepteurs Fc (réponse humorale). Le VIH-1 a développé plusieurs mécanismes moléculaires permettant d'échapper à ces différentes réponses immunitaires afin de se répliquer efficacement et persister dans l'organisme.

### **1.2.1 Réponses innées**

Les infections virales sont détectées par des composantes du système immunitaire inné par l'intermédiaire de récepteurs de reconnaissance de motifs moléculaires (PRR) capables de reconnaître les motifs moléculaires associés aux agents pathogènes (PAMP). Parmi les PRR, on

compte notamment les récepteurs de type Toll (TLR), les récepteurs de type RIG-I (RLR), les senseurs d'ADN cytosolique (CDS), les lectines de type C (CLR) et les récepteurs de type NOD (NLR). L'activation de ces récepteurs déclenche des cascades de signalisation convergentes qui aboutissent à la relocalisation nucléaire de facteurs de transcription, stimulant un nouveau programme transcriptionnel qui mène à la libération de cytokines pro-inflammatoires, de chimiokines et d'interférons afin d'amorcer la réponse antivirale ([919](#), [920](#)). Dans l'infection par le VIH-1, les cellules dendritiques plasmacytoïdes (pDC) jouent un rôle prépondérant dans l'activation d'une réponse inflammatoire efficace grâce à l'expression constitutive d'une vaste gamme de PRR ([921-928](#)). Dépendamment du mode d'entrée virale, l'ARNv simple brin peut être détecté dans les endosomes par les TLR7 et TLR8, ce qui mène au recrutement de l'adaptateur MyD88 et à la translocation nucléaire de NF- $\kappa$ B et d'un homodimère d'IRF7 ([929-937](#)). La translocation microbienne induite par le VIH-1 contribue également à l'inflammation en activant des TLR de surface reconnaissant des produits bactériens comme les lipopolysaccharides (LPS) ou le peptidoglycane ([938](#)). La détection du génome viral peut également se faire via les senseurs présents dans le cytoplasme par la détection de l'ARNv simple brin par les RLR (RIG-I, MDA5) ou par la détection de l'ADNv double brin par les CDS (IFI16, cGAS) ([939-944](#)). La signalisation des RLR passe par l'adaptateur MAVS, présent sur les mitochondries, et mène à l'import nucléaire de NF- $\kappa$ B et d'un hétérodimère d'IRF3 et IRF7, tandis que la signalisation des CDS passe par STING et mène à l'import nucléaire de NF- $\kappa$ B et d'un homodimère d'IRF3 ([945](#), [946](#)).

Le VIH-1 est toutefois connu pour sa capacité à échapper à la détection du système immunitaire inné ([947](#)). En plus de la séquestration de RIG-I grâce à la protéase virale, la présence d'une coiffe, d'une queue polyadénylée et de sites de méthylation sur l'ARNv rend l'activation des RLR peu efficace ([948-950](#)). La stabilité remarquable de la capsid virale joue également un rôle majeur pour protéger le génome viral des différents senseurs d'acides nucléiques durant la rétrotranscription et plus particulièrement les CDS ([951-954](#)). Le VIH-1 agit également en aval des cascades de signalisation des PRR en bloquant la translocation nucléaire des facteurs de transcription IRF3, IRF7 et NF- $\kappa$ B grâce à plusieurs mécanismes impliquant les protéines accessoires Vif, Vpr et Vpu ([544](#), [610](#), [612](#), [955-958](#)). En plus du génome viral, plusieurs protéines du VIH-1 peuvent agir en tant que PAMP, incluant Env et PR. La reconnaissance des N-glycans présents sur la gp120 par les récepteurs CLR a un rôle ambigu dans l'activation de l'immunité

innée puisque sa liaison à DC-SIGN stimule la voie NF- $\kappa$ B, tandis que la liaison à BDCA-2 inhibe la signalisation des TLR endosomaux (959-963). Une régulation adéquate de l'activité enzymatique de PR est également très importante puisque son activation prématurée peut être détectée par CARD8, une composante de l'inflammasome, menant ainsi à l'activation de la caspase-1 qui déclenche la relâche des cytokines pro-inflammatoires IL-1 $\beta$  et IL-18 et induit la mort cellulaire par pyroptose (964). Dans l'ensemble, le VIH-1 contrôle efficacement l'activation des différents PRR lors de l'infection productive, suggérant la présence d'infection abortive comme source plus plausible de la stimulation de l'immunité innée antivirale (965-967).

### 1.2.1.1 Réponse interféron

Les IFN-I forment une famille de cytokines pléiotropes, pro-inflammatoires et immunomodulatrices, qui induisent un état antiviral par la régulation positive de centaines d'ISGs. Le génome humain code pour 17 IFN-I différents, dont 13 types d'IFN- $\alpha$ , ainsi que l'IFN- $\beta$ , l'IFN- $\epsilon$ , l'IFN- $\kappa$  et l'IFN- $\omega$  (968, 969). En réponse aux infections virales, Les IFN-I sont rapidement sécrétés puis signalent de manière autocrine et paracrine en se liant au récepteur hétérodimérique de l'interféron- $\alpha/\beta$  (IFNAR) exprimé de manière ubiquitaire (970). L'engagement d'IFNAR active une voie de transduction intracellulaire de type JAK-STAT, qui débute par la phosphorylation des tyrosine kinases JAK1 et TYK2, ce qui permettra l'import nucléaire d'un complexe phosphorylé formé par STAT1, STAT2 et IRF9 (971, 972) et l'induction d'un profil transcriptionnel antiviral caractérisé par l'expression des différents facteurs de restriction (APOBEC3s, TRIM5 $\alpha$ , SAMHD1, BST-2) et de plusieurs facteurs de résistance (IFITMs, MX2, GBP2/5, ZAP, SLFN11) (973). Par contre, les protéines accessoires du VIH-1 sont capables d'interférer avec la signalisation d'IFNAR en induisant la dégradation de STAT1 par le protéasome ou en inhibant sa phosphorylation (611, 974). Bien que tous les sous-types d'IFN-I se lient au même récepteur, ils diffèrent dans leur affinité pour l'IFNAR et déclenchent différents schémas d'expression des ISGs, ce qui suggère qu'ils varient dans leur activité et leur puissance *in vivo* (975-978). En effet, l'IFN- $\beta$  et l'IFN- $\alpha$ 14 semblent être les sous-types ayant le plus grand potentiel antiviral tant *in vitro* qu'*in vivo* (979-984).

Des études dans des modèles *in vivo* ont démontré l'importance des IFN-I pour limiter la transmission du VIH-1 et pour contrôler la phase aiguë de l'infection par le VIH-1 en limitant la

charge virale, l'établissement du réservoir et l'évolution de la maladie (985-990). Cependant, une réponse soutenue à l'IFN-I est préjudiciable, car elle contribue à augmenter l'inflammation systémique chronique et la diminution des comptes de lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> (990-992). La déplétion des pDCs productrices d'IFN-I chez les patients infectés a été corrélée avec une augmentation de la charge virale, tandis que les niveaux élevés de pDCs retrouvés chez les contrôleurs élités contribuent au contrôle de la réplication du VIH-1 (993-995). Certaines études cliniques ont évalué les avantages thérapeutiques de l'administration d'IFN-I à des individus infectés par le VIH-1 sous traitement ART. Lors d'interruptions planifiées du traitement antirétroviral, l'administration d'IFN- $\alpha$ 2 a permis de prolonger le contrôle viral, d'atténuer le rebond de la virémie et de diminuer la taille du réservoir (996-1002). Afin de mieux comprendre la pression exercée par l'IFN-I *in vivo*, des études récentes ont évalué la sensibilité du virus circulant à l'IFN- $\alpha$ 2 et l'IFN- $\beta$  lors de différentes phases de l'infection. Ces études ont montré que les virus T/F sont hautement résistants à l'IFN-I et que cette résistance constitue un déterminant majeur de l'aptitude à la transmission du VIH-1 et de la réplication lors de la phase aiguë de l'infection (564, 789, 790, 792, 1003). En revanche, les virus isolés au cours de la phase chronique deviennent généralement sensibles à l'IFN-I, mais cette sensibilité est perdue lors de la progression vers la phase SIDA (792, 1003-1005). Parallèlement, le virus présent lors du traitement suppressif par ART est relativement sensible à l'IFN-I, tandis que l'interruption du traitement donne lieu à une recrudescence de virus à très haut degré de résistance à l'IFN-I (1003). Somme toute, la résistance à la réponse interféron semble donner un avantage sélectif aux quasi-espèces pendant les phases exponentielles de réplication, soit lors de la transmission ou du rebond viral post-traitement.

### 1.2.2 Réponses à médiation cellulaire

Lors de la phase aiguë de l'infection par le VIH-1, deux types cellulaires sont principalement responsables du contrôle initial de la virémie grâce à leur capacité à éliminer les cellules infectées par une réponse cytotoxique directe : les lymphocytes T CD8<sup>+</sup> appartenant à l'immunité adaptative et les cellules NK appartenant à l'immunité innée.

### 1.2.2.1 Lymphocytes T CD8<sup>+</sup>

Une réponse antivirale robuste par les lymphocytes T CD8<sup>+</sup> cytotoxiques (CTL) est mise en place au cours de la phase précoce de l'infection par le VIH-1 et est responsable en grande partie de la diminution de la charge virale initiale (825, 1006-1008). La réponse CTL est initialement dirigée contre un nombre restreint d'épitopes linéaires présents dans les protéines Env et Nef de la souche T/F qui sont présentés au TCR par le CMH-I à la surface des cellules infectées (1009-1011). Cette pression immunitaire force une sélection rapide de mutations non-synonymes dans les épitopes ciblés permettant d'échapper à la reconnaissance par les CTL (1009, 1012, 1013). La magnitude de la réponse précoce des CTL spécifiques au VIH-1 influence les niveaux auxquels la charge virale se stabilise pendant la phase chronique, un déterminant important de la progression de la maladie (1014, 1015). Pendant la phase chronique de l'infection, la réponse CTL se diversifie et cible d'autres antigènes viraux, dont Gag (1016-1020). Le contrôle de la virémie par les CTL est hautement dépendant des variations alléliques du CMH-I présentes chez l'individu infecté et le développement d'un statut de contrôleur élite est plus souvent lié à l'expression des allèles HLA-B\*57 et HLA-B\*27 (1021-1025). Ces deux allèles sont capables de présenter des épitopes conservés de la capsid virale importants pour la liaison à CypA et l'introduction de mutations échappatoires dans ces épitopes diminue grandement la capacité du virus à se répliquer et augmente la restriction par TRIM5 $\alpha$  (1026-1031). En outre, les lymphocytes T CD8<sup>+</sup> spécifiques au VIH-1 possédant des capacités cytotoxiques, prolifératives et polyfonctionnelles ont été corrélées avec un meilleur contrôle de la virémie et des réservoirs pendant la phase chronique ou sous traitement ART (1032-1040). En plus des fonctions cytolytiques, les lymphocytes T CD8<sup>+</sup> peuvent utiliser des mécanismes antiviraux non-lytiques faisant intervenir des molécules solubles, telles que les chimiokines MIP-1 $\alpha$ , MIP-1 $\beta$  et RANTES, pouvant se lier au récepteur CCR5 et limiter l'infection par le VIH-1 en diminuant les niveaux de surface du récepteur ou compétitionner pour la liaison d'Env à son corécepteur principal (1041, 1042). Cependant, le VIH-1 réussit à échapper à la réponse des lymphocytes T CD8<sup>+</sup> malgré l'étendue de leurs activités antivirales. Les facteurs contribuant à cette évasion immunitaire comprennent la modulation à la baisse des molécules classiques du CMH-I par Nef et Vpu (711, 712, 738, 762, 763), l'inaccessibilité des CTL à certains sites anatomiques de réplication virale comme les centres germinatifs (856, 859, 1043-1045) et l'épuisement immunitaire causée par la persistance antigénique et l'inflammation chronique (905, 1046-1049).

### 1.2.2.2 Cellules NK

Les cellules NK sont un sous-ensemble de lymphocytes de l'immunité innée, capables, lorsqu'elles sont matures et éduquées, de répondre rapidement à la présence d'une infection sans qu'une exposition préalable à un antigène soit nécessaire. Elles exercent des fonctions effectrices et immunorégulatrices s'apparentant à celles des lymphocytes T CD8<sup>+</sup> dans la réponse précoce aux infections virales (1050). Elles peuvent être divisées en deux sous-populations principales basées sur le niveau d'expression du marqueur CD56: les cellules NK CD56<sup>haut</sup>, située dans les organes lymphoïdes secondaires, produisant des cytokines (IFN- $\gamma$ , TNF- $\alpha$ ) et les chimiokines pro-inflammatoires (MIP-1 $\alpha$ , MIP-1 $\beta$ , RANTES) (1051, 1052), et les cellules NK CD56<sup>bas</sup>, plus nombreuses en circulation, ayant un plus grand potentiel cytolytique (1053, 1054). Les cellules CD56<sup>bas</sup> cytotoxiques sont caractérisées par expression de la molécule CD16, un récepteur activateur de faible affinité pour la région constante Fc des anticorps de type IgG, ce qui leur permet d'avoir une activité de cytotoxicité cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCC) (1055). Ces cellules NK effectrices comportent des granules cytolytiques, composées notamment de perforines et de granzymes, dont le contenu sera relargué dans la synapse immunologique lors de la reconnaissance de ligands de récepteurs activateurs ou d'anticorps opsonisés à la surface d'une cellule infectée (1056). La perforine s'insère dans la membrane cible et s'assemble sous forme de pores permettant le passage vers le cytoplasme des granzymes, des sérine protéases capables d'induire l'apoptose de la cellule via l'activation de la voie des caspases (1057). L'activité des cellules NK est modulée par une série de cytokines incluant les IFN-I, les cytokines  $\gamma$ c comme l'IL-2, l'IL-15 et l'IL-21 ainsi que l'IL-12 et l'IL-18 (1058-1060). L'IL-15 joue un rôle particulièrement important puisqu'elle régule la génération, la différenciation et la survie des cellules NK, en plus d'augmenter ses capacités d'activation, de cytotoxicité et d'immunorégulation (1061-1064).

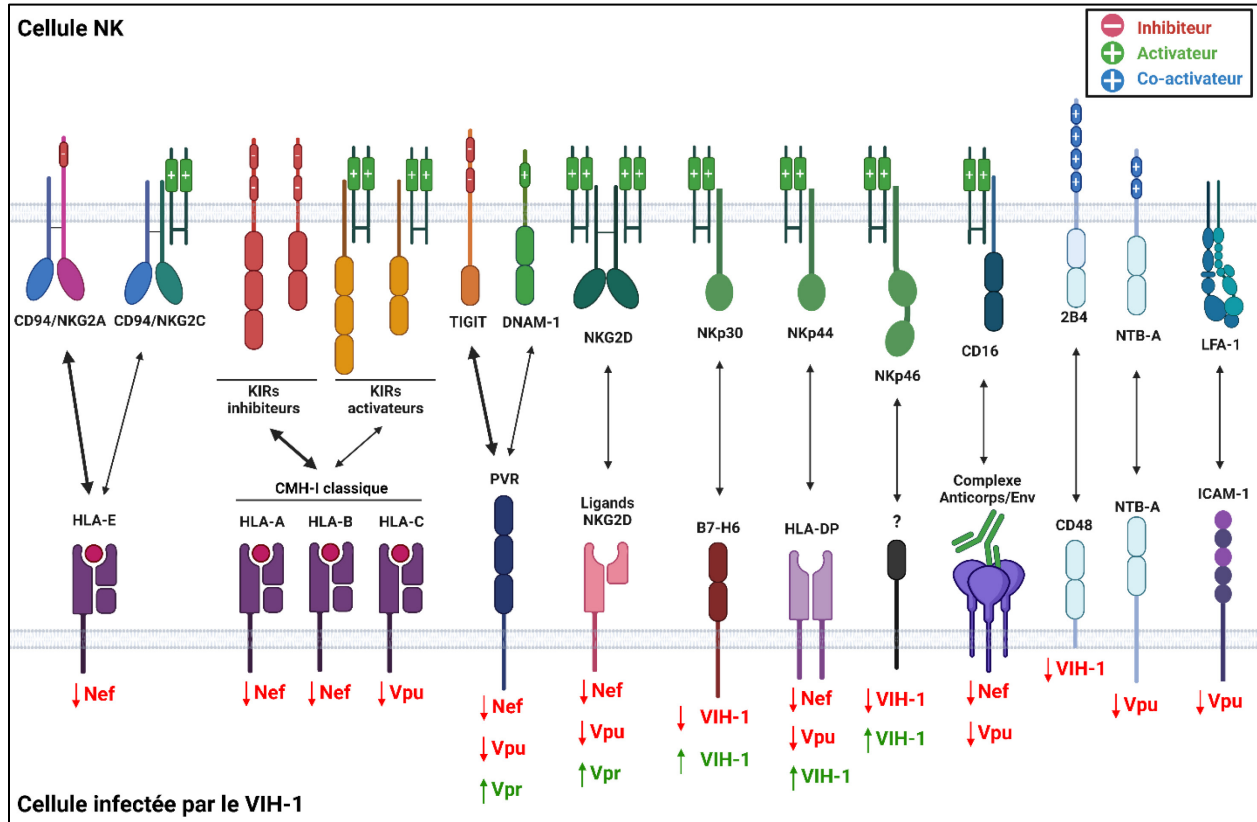
Le déclenchement de la dégranulation des cellules NK au contact des cellules cibles est contrôlé par l'équilibre des signaux reçus par les récepteurs activateurs et inhibiteurs présents à leur surface (**Figure 1.1.8**). De façon générale, les récepteurs activateurs s'associent avec des protéines adaptatrices intracellulaires possédant un motif d'activation de type ITAM comme DAP12, CD3 $\zeta$  et Fc $\epsilon$ RI $\gamma$  (1065-1067), tandis que les récepteurs inhibiteurs possèdent un ou plusieurs motifs d'inhibition de type ITIM dans leur queue cytoplasmique (1068). Lors de

l'engagement de ces récepteurs, les motifs ITAM permettent le recrutement de tyrosine kinases déclenchant des voies de signalisation menant à la dégranulation (1069), tandis que les motifs ITIM recrutent des phosphatases qui répriment les cascades de phosphorylation nécessaires à l'activation des fonctions effectrices (1070). Les principaux signaux inhibiteurs des cellules NK proviennent des récepteurs KIR à longue queue cytoplasmique qui reconnaissent les molécules classiques du CMH-I (HLA-A, HLA-B, HLA-C), et du récepteur hétérodimérique CD94-NKG2A reconnaissant HLA-E, une molécule non-classique du CMH-I présentant le peptide signal clivé à partir des molécules HLA-A/B/C (1071, 1072). Certains récepteurs activateurs comme les récepteurs KIR à courte queue cytoplasmique et le complexe CD94-NKG2C partagent une spécificité commune avec les récepteurs inhibiteurs pour la liaison des molécules du CMH-I, mais leurs interactions sont de moindre affinité (1073, 1074). De façon similaire, le récepteur activateur DNAM-1 partage la liaison du ligand de stress PVR avec la molécule de point de contrôle immunitaire TIGIT dans un système favorisant l'interaction PVR-TIGIT (1075-1077). Parmi les récepteurs activateurs principaux, on retrouve le récepteur homodimérique NKG2D qui s'associe à la protéine adaptatrice DAP10 et qui reconnaît une variété de molécules du CMH-I non-classiques, incluant les ULBP1-6, MICA et MICB, exprimées en réponse à certains stress cellulaires (1078). Les récepteurs naturels de cytotoxicité (NCR) tels que NKp30, NKp44 et NKp46 sont des récepteurs activateurs dont les ligands sont méconnus (1079). Il a été suggéré que NKp30 se lie à la molécule de stress B7-H6 (1080), tandis que NKp44 se lie à certaines molécules du CMH-II, plus particulièrement des allèles de HLA-DP capables de présenter des peptides endogènes (1081, 1082). Le facteur P de la voie alterne du complément (aussi appelé properdine) a récemment été montré comme étant un ligand du récepteur NKp46 (1083). Il a été suggéré que le facteur P puisse agir en tant que PRR étant donné sa capacité à interagir avec de nombreuses protéines virales, bactériennes et parasitaires (1084). Les cellules NK expriment également les récepteurs de la famille SLAM incluant NTB-A et 2B4, dont les ligands respectifs sont NTB-A et CD48 (1085, 1086). Ces récepteurs coactivateurs ne peuvent induire la dégranulation seuls, toutefois leur stimulation conjointe avec les différents récepteurs activateurs montre un effet synergique permettant une activation plus efficace des cellules NK (1087).

Comme le VIH-1 affecte l'expression de surface du CMH-I afin d'évader la réponse CTL, cela cause un déséquilibre de la réponse NK puisque la perte des signaux inhibiteurs favorise



leur activation (1088). De surcroît, l'expression de surface de la majorité des ligands des récepteurs activateurs est induite par l'infection par le VIH-1, notamment par l'activation de la voie des dommages à l'ADN par Vpr et par l'activation de la voie de stress du RE, potentiellement causée



**Figure 1.1.8 - Les récepteurs des cellules NK et la modulation de leurs ligands par le VIH-1 et ses protéines accessoires.**

Les fonctions effectrices des cellules NK sont régulées par une balance de signaux provenant de récepteurs activateurs et inhibiteurs. Les récepteurs inhibiteurs de type KIR et CD94-NKG2A reconnaissent des molécules du CMH-I (HLA-A, HLA-B, HLA-C, HLA-E) qui peuvent également être reconnues par des récepteurs activateurs de moindre affinité, les KIRs activateurs et CD94-NKG2C, respectivement. Les récepteurs activateurs (NKG2D, DNAM-1, NKp30, NK44, NKp46) reconnaissent principalement des molécules de surface induites par l'infection virale (ULBPs, MICA/B, PVR, B7-H6, HLA-DP) via un stress cellulaire qui peut dépendre de la protéine accessoire Vpr ou des anticorps liés à un antigène viral (Env) dans le cas du récepteur Fc CD16. Le récepteur inhibiteur TIGIT lie également PVR et compétitionne avec DNAM-1 par son affinité supérieure. Les récepteurs de type SLAM (NTB-A, 2B4) servent de récepteurs coactivateurs grâce à leur synergie avec les différents récepteurs activateurs. L'intégrine LFA-1 favorise la formation de la synapse immunologique et la polarisation de la cellule NK en interagissant avec ICAM-1. Le VIH-1 est capable de réguler négativement la quasi-totalité des ligands de cellules NK, autant activateurs qu'inhibiteurs, via les protéines accessoires Nef et Vpu. Figure inspirée de (1089). Diagramme créé avec [BioRender.com](https://www.biorender.com).

par des protéines d'Env mal repliées ([634-636](#), [1090-1093](#)). Étant donné que la somme de ces effets sur la balance des signaux est défavorable pour la survie de la cellule infectée, le VIH-1 a développé de nombreuses stratégies pour évader la réponse NK. Les protéines accessoires Nef et Vpu agissent de manière redondante afin d'altérer le trafic vers la surface cellulaire de PVR, des ligands de NKG2D et des molécules matures du CMH-II incluant HLA-DP ([708](#), [773](#), [1094-1097](#)). L'expression de surface des ligands des récepteurs activateurs NKp30 et NKp46 ainsi que des récepteurs coactivateurs 2B4 et NTB-A est également connue pour être supprimée lors de l'infection par le VIH-1 ([699](#), [707](#), [1098](#)). La réponse anticorps chez les individus infectés, principalement dirigée contre Env, est peu efficace pour reconnaître les cellules infectées, notamment à cause de l'endocytose constitutive d'Env et du ciblage de CD4 et BST-2 par Nef et Vpu, ce qui ne permet pas la formation d'une quantité suffisante de complexes immuns pour activer CD16 ([756](#), [1099-1102](#)). En plus de limiter l'activation de la cellule NK, le VIH-1 altère la formation de la synapse immunologique et la polarisation des granules lytiques par LFA-1 en modulant à la baisse les niveaux de surface de la molécule d'adhésion ICAM-1 ([1103](#), [1104](#)). Dans l'ensemble, le VIH-1 réussit à atténuer la réponse NK en rétablissant une balance des signaux lui étant favorable.

Lors de la phase aiguë de l'infection par le VIH-1, les cellules NK jouent un rôle critique dans l'établissement de la réponse immunitaire. La production massive d'IFN-I et d'IL-15 en réponse à l'infection permet l'activation et l'expansion rapide des cellules NK cytotoxiques avant l'établissement de la réponse adaptative médiée par les lymphocytes T CD8<sup>+</sup> et les anticorps ([986](#), [1105](#), [1106](#)). Les cellules NK contribuent au contrôle initial de la virémie grâce à leur activité cytolytique, mais également en stimulant la réponse CTL par la sécrétion d'IFN- $\gamma$ , et en relâchant les différentes chimiokines liant CCR5 ([1105](#), [1107](#), [1108](#)). Le contrôle de la charge virale est associé à l'expression du récepteur de chimiokine CXCR5 par les cellules NK, leur permettant de migrer vers les follicules B dans les ganglions lymphatiques, où se trouvent des cellules T<sub>FH</sub> infectées ([1109-1111](#)). La combinaison des récepteurs KIR et des allèles du CMH-I exprimés chez les individus infectés semble également jouer un rôle important dans le contrôle de l'infection. En effet, la co-expression du récepteur activateur KIR3DS1 et de certains allèles HLA-B chez les individus infectés corrèle avec de meilleures fonctions effectrices et une progression plus lente vers la phase SIDA ([1112](#), [1113](#)). L'expression homozygote du KIR3DS1 est également enrichie

chez les personnes séronégatives hautement exposées au VIH-1, qui possède une résistance naturelle à l'infection ([1114](#), [1115](#)). La progression vers la phase chronique de l'infection chez les individus virémiques est généralement associée avec la dysfonction des cellules NK caractérisée par une perte de leurs activités cytolytiques et immunorégulatrices ([1116-1118](#)). Ceci est notamment lié à la diminution de l'expression de nombreux récepteurs activateurs tels que NKG2D, NKp30, NKp44 et NKp46 ([1119-1124](#)). Cependant, le traitement ART semble permettre un rétablissement de l'expression de ces récepteurs et de restaurer les fonctions effectrices des cellules NK ([1120](#), [1123](#)).

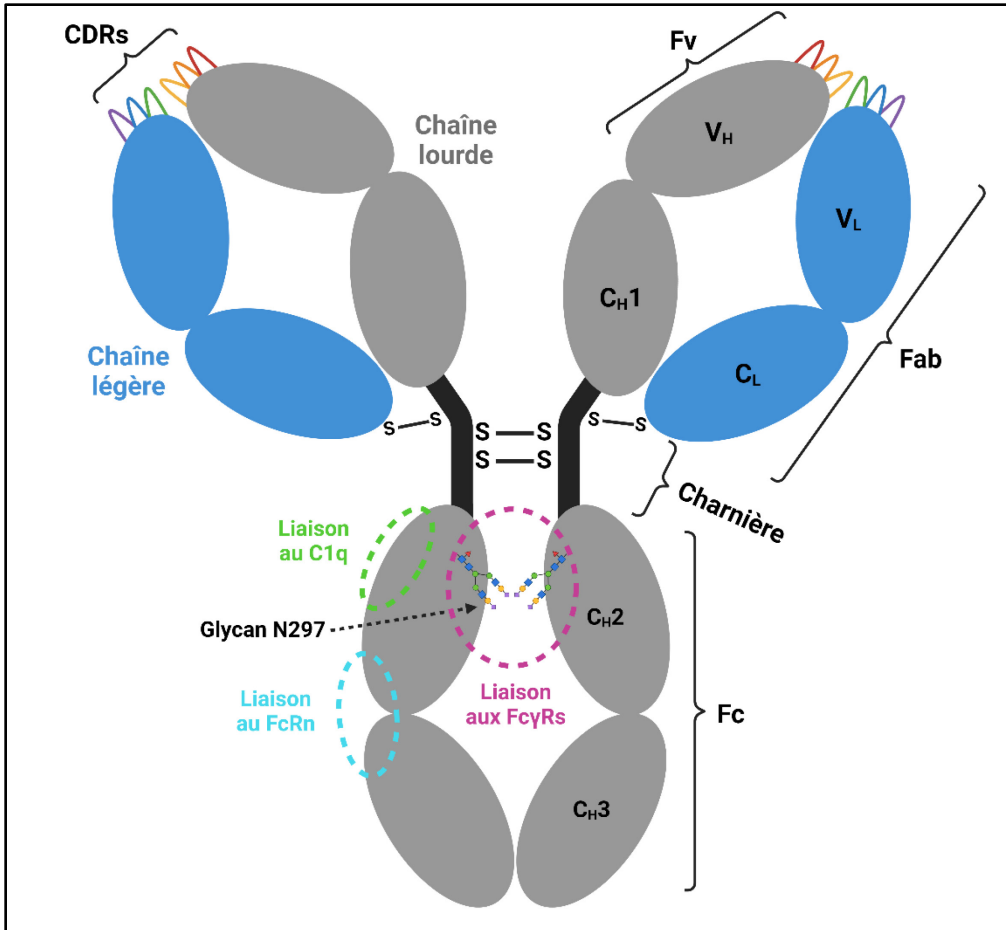
### 1.2.3 Réponses humorales

Comme le trimère d'Env du VIH-1 est le seul antigène viral exposé à la surface des particules virales et des cellules infectées, il représente la cible principale de la réponse humorale via la génération d'anticorps neutralisants et non-neutralisants par les lymphocytes B. Au cours de l'infection par le VIH-1, les anticorps spécifiques pour Env sont détectables dès la phase aiguë, environ deux ou trois semaines suivant l'infection ([1125](#)). La réponse anticorps initiale est constituée d'immunoglobulines (Ig)M dirigées contre la gp41 des souches T/F ([1125](#)). Au cours des semaines suivantes, on peut détecter des réponses de type IgG et IgA dans le sang et les muqueuses grâce à la commutation de classe ([1125](#)), et un élargissement dans la spécificité des épitopes reconnus notamment contre l'extrémité de la boucle V3 et la passerelle en feuillet  $\beta$  (*bridging sheet*) de la gp120, deux composantes importantes pour l'interaction avec le corécepteur ([1126-1128](#)). Cependant, ces épitopes immunodominants ne sont pas exposés dans la conformation pré-fusion d'Env, appelée conformation « fermée », et donc génèrent des anticorps non-neutralisants (nnAbs) n'ayant aucun impact détectable sur la charge virale ([1125](#)). Des anticorps neutralisants ciblant uniquement la souche T/F autologue sont détectables dans les premiers mois après l'infection et reconnaissent principalement les régions variables V1/V2 et V3 d'Env, mais ceux-ci conduisent à la sélection de mutations échappatoires ([1129-1138](#)). Comme les souches T/F ont généralement moins de sites de N-glycosylation, cela génère des brèches dans le bouclier de glycans d'Env qui sont très immunogéniques et propices à la génération d'anticorps neutralisants autologues (aNAbs) ([786](#), [793](#), [1139](#), [1140](#)). Un processus de coévolution entre le virus et l'hôte est enclenché après la réponse anticorps initiale. Pendant la phase chronique, la sélection répétée de mutations échappatoires chez le virus augmente de plus en plus la maturation des anticorps afin

de s'adapter aux changements dans les épitopes reconnus par les NAbS ([1141-1146](#)). Chez moins de 10% des d'individus infectés de façon chronique, des anticorps neutralisants à large spectre (bNAbS) qui ciblent des épitopes conservés dans plusieurs souches peuvent être produits lors d'une exposition virale prolongée ([1147](#), [1148](#)).

### 1.2.3.1 Structure des IgG

Les anticorps de type IgG spécifiques au VIH-1 représentent la population isotypique majoritaire des anticorps présents en circulation suite à l'infection et peuvent exercer une multitude de fonctions antivirales incluant la neutralisation des virions et l'élimination des cellules infectées en recrutant des cellules effectrices du système immunitaire ([1149](#)). Les IgG sont composées de deux chaînes légères ( $\kappa$  ou  $\lambda$ ) et deux chaînes lourdes ( $\gamma$ ) qui sont liées entre elles de manière symétrique par des ponts disulfures pour former deux domaines fonctionnels : le fragment de liaison à l'antigène (Fab) et le fragment cristallisable (Fc) (**Figure 1.1.9**). Le fragment Fab contient notamment de régions hautement variables à son extrémité qui peuvent être mutées génétiquement par un processus d'hypermutation somatique ([1150](#)). Chacun des domaines variables des chaînes lourdes et légères est composé de trois régions déterminant la complémentarité (CDR), qui forment ensemble le paratope, et qui interagissent avec un antigène via un épitope spécifique ([1151](#)). Ce fragment est le déterminant majeur de la capacité neutralisante d'un anticorps. Le fragment Fc des IgG, formé par les domaines  $C_{H2}$  et  $C_{H3}$  de la chaîne lourde, est constitué d'une séquence et d'une structure conservées déterminant les fonctionnalités effectrices de l'anticorps et peut être catégorisé en quatre sous-classes isotypiques (IgG1, IgG2, IgG3, IgG4) ([1152](#)). Ce fragment possède des domaines structuraux lui permettant d'interagir avec la molécule C1q pour déclencher la cascade du complément ([1153](#)) et avec les récepteurs Fc des IgG (Fc $\gamma$ Rs) pour recruter des cellules effectrices de l'immunité innée ([1154](#)). Le site de liaison aux Fc $\gamma$ Rs comporte notamment la présence d'un glycan (N297) à l'interface des domaines  $C_{H2}$  ([1155](#)). Un troisième site chevauchant les domaines  $C_{H2}$  et  $C_{H3}$  permet de prolonger la demi-vie des anticorps par sa liaison au récepteur Fc néonatal (FcRn), présent principalement dans le système endosomal de plusieurs types cellulaires, en empêchant leur dégradation par les lysosomes, ce qui permet le recyclage des IgG vers la circulation ([1156](#), [1157](#)). Les fragments Fab et Fc sont reliés par une région charnière qui assure une flexibilité moléculaire permettant la liaison bivalente des portions Fab et l'accessibilité de la portion Fc pour ses récepteurs ([1158](#), [1159](#)).



**Figure 1.1.9 - Structure des anticorps de type IgG1.**

Une molécule d'IgG1 possède un poids moléculaire de 150 kDa et est composée de deux chaînes lourdes (H) identiques de 50 kDa, et de deux chaînes légères (L) identiques de 25 kDa, qui sont reliées par des ponts disulfures (S—S). La portion Fab permet la liaison à un antigène via les régions déterminant la complémentarité (CDRs) situées dans le fragment variable (Fv) des chaînes lourdes et légères (V<sub>H</sub> et V<sub>L</sub>). La portion Fc est formée de régions constantes (C<sub>H2</sub> et C<sub>H3</sub>) et sert d'adaptateur capable de recruter les cellules effectrices par la liaison aux récepteurs Fc des IgG (FcγRs) et le système du complément par la liaison au C1q. Le glycan N297 se situe à l'interface avec les FcγRs et contribue à leur interaction. Un troisième site permet le recyclage et la transcytose des IgG par la liaison au FcRn. La portion charnière assure une certaine flexibilité permettant la liaison bivalente des portions Fab et l'accessibilité de la portion Fc pour ses récepteurs. Diagramme créé avec [BioRender.com](https://www.biorender.com).

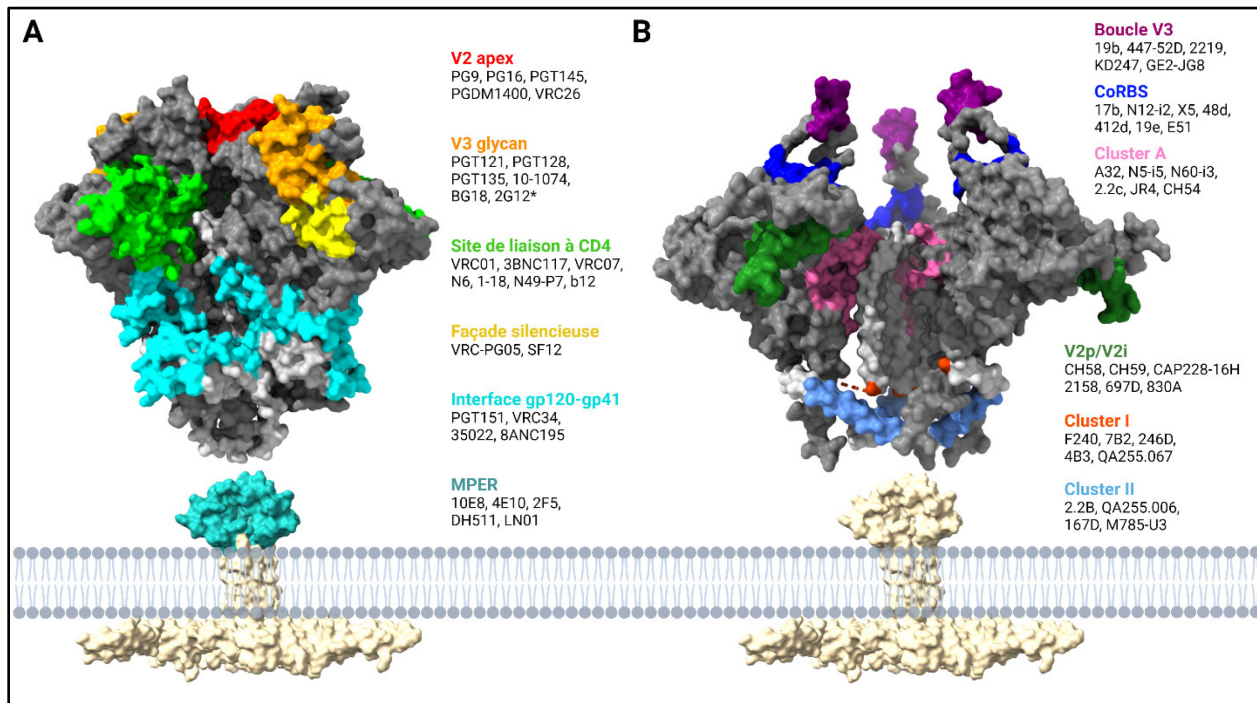
### 1.2.3.2 Anticorps neutralisants et non-neutralisants

La caractérisation d'un vaste panel de souches d'Env du VIH-1 provenant de différents clades, localisations géographiques et stades de l'infection a permis de démontrer que les isolats du VIH-1 présentent un spectre de sensibilité à la neutralisation par le plasma d'individus infectés

par le VIH-1 (plasma VIH<sup>+</sup>) qui peut être classé en trois niveaux (tiers) distincts ([1160](#), [1161](#)). Le tiers 1, le plus sensible à la neutralisation, représente une fraction très mineure des souches en circulation et est particulièrement enrichi en isolats adaptés en laboratoire et en souches à tropisme X4. Le tiers 2, modérément sensible à la neutralisation, et le tiers 3, le plus résistant à la neutralisation, englobent la majorité des souches en circulation incluant les souches T/F. La conformation adoptée par Env semble être le facteur déterminant pour dicter la résistance à la neutralisation puisque les souches d'Env du tiers 1 présentent une propension à adopter la conformation « ouverte » d'Env, tandis que les souches d'Env des tiers 2 et 3 sont stabilisées dans la conformation « fermée » ([217](#), [1162](#)).

Les bNAbs générés contre le VIH-1 ciblent des épitopes relativement conservés sur le trimère d'Env pré-fusion et possèdent des capacités neutralisantes contre des souches virales hétérologues de tiers 2 et 3 (**Figure 1.1.10**). Ils bloquent donc l'entrée du virus en empêchant soit la liaison au récepteur CD4, soit les changements de conformation d'Env nécessaire à la fusion ([217](#), [1163-1165](#)). Les bNAbs peuvent être classés en fonction des épitopes distincts qu'ils ciblent sur le trimère d'Env : le site de liaison à CD4 (CD4BS) ([1166-1171](#)), la boucle V2 situé à l'apex du trimère (V2 apex) ([1143](#), [1172-1174](#)), les glycanes à la base de la boucle V3 (V3 glycan) ([1173](#), [1175](#), [1176](#)), la façade silencieuse ([1177](#), [1178](#)), l'interface entre la gp120 et la gp41 ([1179-1182](#)), et la région externe proximale à la membrane (MPER) de la gp41 ([1183-1186](#)). Deux nouvelles classes de bNAbs récemment identifiées reconnaissent le corridor V2/V5 et la couronne de la boucle V3 ([1187](#), [1188](#)). Comme les bNAbs reconnaissent principalement la forme « fermée » d'Env, leurs épitopes se trouvent généralement dans les régions variables, ou à proximité, et comportent la présence d'un ou de plusieurs glycanes ([1189](#), [1190](#)). Afin d'accommoder ces contraintes, la majorité des bNAbs possèdent une ou plusieurs particularités inhabituelles expliquant leur rareté. Ceux-ci incluent des niveaux très élevés d'hypermutation somatique dus à de multiples cycles de maturation de l'affinité, des CDR3 de la chaîne lourde exceptionnellement longues et la présence de polyréactivité ou d'autoréactivité ([1191](#)). Les bNAbs isolés jusqu'à présent se présentent généralement sous forme d'IgG chez des individus virémiques, mais plusieurs études récentes ont permis l'identification de bNAbs chez des individus contrôlant leur charge virale, notamment sous forme d'IgA ([1176](#), [1188](#), [1192-1194](#)). L'anticorps 2G12 est un cas particulier puisque son épitope est composé exclusivement de glycanes et qu'il définit une catégorie

d'anticorps naturels dont les deux portions Fab s'assemblent sous forme d'un dimère formant un paratope unique pouvant reconnaître des glycanes du non-soi ([1195-1197](#)).



### Figure 1.1.10 - Les épitopes d'Env reconnus par les bNAbs et les nNAbs

(A) Le trimère d'Env pré-fusion assume une conformation dite « fermée » qui est reconnue préférentiellement par les bNAbs et (B) la liaison à CD4 permet l'adoption de la conformation dite « ouverte » est reconnue préférentiellement par les nNAbs. Les épitopes reconnus par les différentes classes de bNAbs et nNAbs sont indiqués par un code de couleur et chaque classe est accompagnée d'une liste des anticorps prototypiques lui appartenant. L'épitope du cluster A défini par l'anticorps C11 n'est pas indiqué puisqu'il n'est pas formé dans la structure d'Env « ouverte » représentée ici. (A-B) Les représentations structurales ont été générées à l'aide du logiciel ChimeraX v1.3 à partir de structures disponibles dans la base de données RCSB PDB. La structure d'Env liée à PG16 (PDB 6ULC) et un modèle de la structure d'Env liée à CD4 et 17b (PDB 3J70) servent de canevas de référence pour les conformations fermée et ouverte, respectivement. Les densités associées aux anticorps et au CD4 ont été enlevées pour une question de clarté. La sous-unité gp120 est illustrée en gris foncé et l'ectodomaine de la gp41 est illustré en gris pâle. La structure du domaine transmembranaire de la gp41 flanqué du MPER et de la queue cytoplasmique (PDB 7LOI) est illustrée en beige. \*L'épitope de 2G12 inclut seulement des glycanes. Diagramme créé avec [BioRender.com](#).

Les études sur des modèles animaux ont permis de démontrer que l'administration prophylactique de bNAbs protégeait contre l'acquisition de l'infection et que leur utilisation thérapeutique permettait de supprimer la charge virale à des niveaux indétectables ([1171](#), [1176](#), [1178](#), [1198-1206](#)). Des anticorps ciblant le CD4BS (VRC01, 3BNC117, VRC07-523, N6), la

région V3 glycan (10-1074, PGT121) ainsi que la région V2 apex (PGDM1400) sont actuellement à l'étude dans de multiples essais cliniques chez l'humain en tant qu'agents thérapeutiques pour contrôler la virémie et éliminer les réservoirs viraux ([ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov): NCT03837756, NCT02664415, NCT04871113, NCT04983030). Des études portant sur l'administration de bNAbs à des participants infectés ont montré une diminution rapide et un contrôle transitoire de la charge virale plasmatique, mais l'apparition de mutations échappatoires a rendu les bNAbs inefficaces ([1207-1211](#)). Pour remédier à ce problème, l'utilisation de combinaisons de bNAbs de plusieurs spécificités différentes est dorénavant privilégiée et permet un contrôle du rebond viral sur une période prolongée après l'interruption du traitement ([1212-1214](#)). Comme le déclin des niveaux de bNAbs dans l'organisme est un facteur limitant, les plus récentes études ont mis à l'essai des bNAbs dont la portion Fc est modifiée pour augmenter la demi-vie de l'anticorps via des mutations augmentant l'affinité pour le FcRn ([ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov): NCT03554408, NCT05079451, NCT04811040, NCT04319367, NCT04212091, NCT03565315).

Au cours de l'infection naturelle, la majorité des anticorps ciblent la conformation « ouverte » d'Env, et présentent donc une activité neutralisante faible ou nulle contre les souches primaires du VIH-1 ([1215](#), [1216](#)). Les épitopes de ces anticorps non-neutralisants sont dissimulés dans la conformation « fermée » du trimère d'Env et nécessitent l'interaction d'Env avec son récepteur CD4 afin de déclencher les changements de conformation nécessaire à l'exposition de ces épitopes dits induits par CD4 (CD4i) ([216](#), [220](#), [221](#), [1217](#), [1218](#)). Or, lors de l'infection productive, les protéines accessoires Nef et Vpu se chargent de réguler négativement l'expression de CD4 à la surface des cellules et dans les compartiments intracellulaires afin de prévenir son interaction avec Env et ainsi exposer les épitopes CD4i facilement reconnus par le plasma VIH<sup>+</sup> ([756](#), [757](#)). Parmi les nnAbs les plus communs dirigés contre la gp120 (**Figure 1.1.10**), on note les nnAbs reconnaissant l'extrémité de la boucle V3 ([1219-1221](#)), un épitope polymorphe de la boucle V2 (V2p/V2i) ([1222-1224](#)), la passerelle en feuillet  $\beta$  du site de liaison au corécepteur (CoRBS) ([219](#), [223](#), [1225-1227](#)), le domaine interne de la gp120 (Cluster A) ([1228-1232](#)). Contrairement aux deux autres classes, les anticorps contre le CoRBS et le cluster A reconnaissent des épitopes situés dans les régions constantes qui sont particulièrement conservés à travers les différents isolats du VIH-1 ([1233](#)). Du côté de la gp41, les nnAbs reconnaissent principalement l'épitope du cluster I, situé dans la boucle disulfure entre HR1 et HR2 ([1234-1236](#)), ainsi que

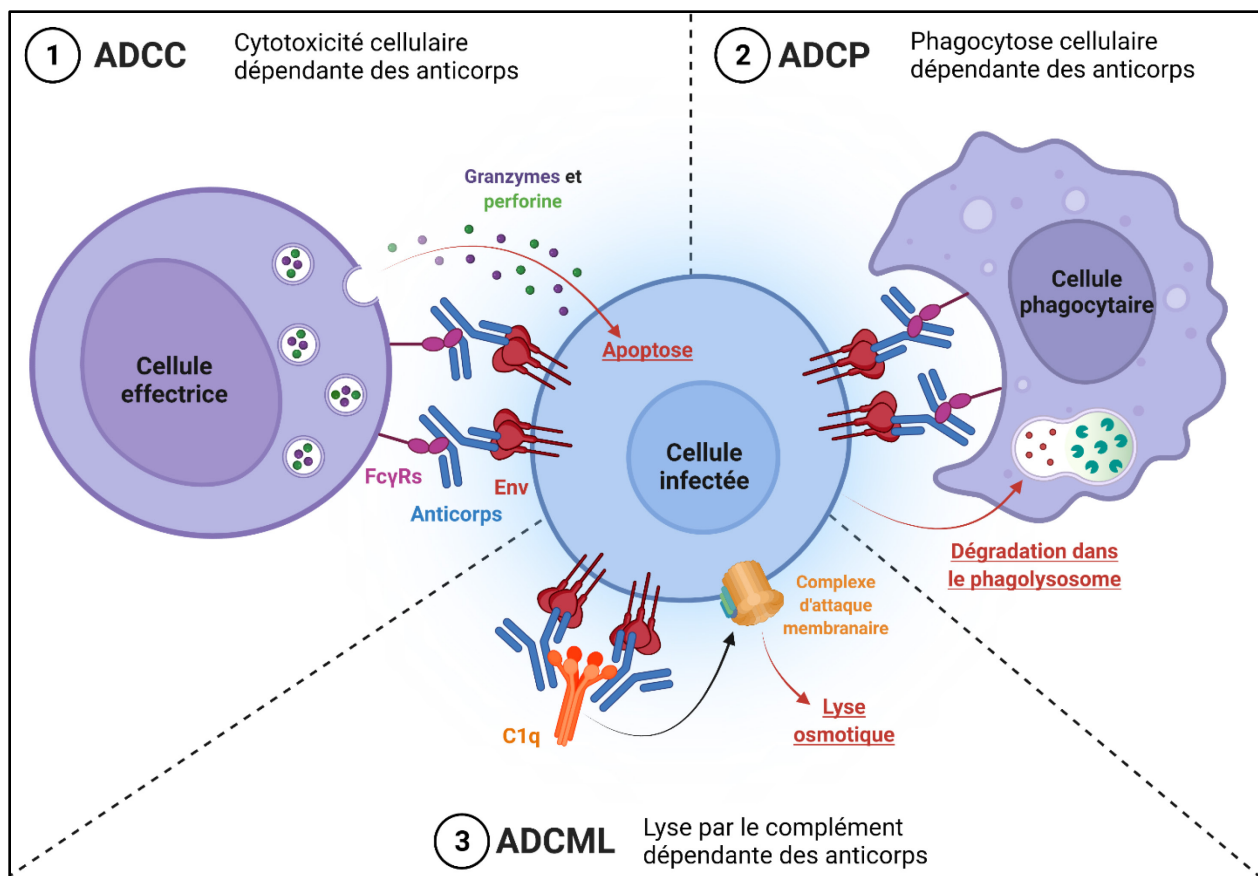


l'épitope du cluster II correspondant à l'hélice  $\alpha$  formée par HR2 ([1237](#)). Comme il existe des interactions non-covalentes entre les sous-unités gp120 et gp41, il peut en résulter une dissociation spontanée de la gp120 de la gp41, ce qui mène à la relâche de gp120 soluble de la surface des cellules infectées ([234](#), [409](#), [410](#)). Par conséquent, des niveaux significatifs de gp120 soluble peuvent être trouvés en circulation dans le sang et les tissus des individus infectés par le VIH-1 ([1238-1240](#)). La gp120 soluble peut interagir avec le CD4 présent à la surface des cellules non-infectées et exposer des épitopes CD4i facilement accessible aux nnAbs, permettant une redirection de la réponse immunitaire vers les cellules non-infectées ([834](#), [1241](#), [1242](#)). Le relargage de la gp120 laisse également un trimère de gp41 exposé à la surface des cellules infectées qui est hautement reconnu par les nnAbs ([1243](#)). Comme l'effet antiviral des nnAbs s'est avéré très limité dans les modèles animaux, aucun essai clinique n'utilise présentement ce type d'anticorps ([1234](#), [1242](#), [1244-1248](#)).

### 1.2.3.3 Fonctions effectrices des anticorps et récepteurs Fc

Il existe divers mécanismes immunitaires médiés par la portion Fc des IgG lesquels pouvant mener à l'élimination des cellules infectées lorsqu'elles sont opsonisées par une quantité suffisante d'anticorps. Ceux-ci incluent la cytotoxicité cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCC), la phagocytose cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCP) et la lyse par le complément dépendante des anticorps (ADCML) (**Figure 1.1.11**). Ces fonctions effectrices Fc-dépendantes peuvent être médiées autant par les bNAbs que les nnAbs, à la condition que leurs épitopes respectifs soient exposés à la surface des cellules infectées.

Les récepteurs Fc (FcR), forment une famille de récepteurs de surface cellulaire qui se lient spécifiquement à la partie Fc des anticorps de type IgG (Fc $\gamma$ R), de type IgA (Fc $\alpha$ R) et de type IgE (Fc $\epsilon$ R). Il existe six membres de la famille des Fc $\gamma$ Rs dont les récepteurs activateurs Fc $\gamma$ RI (CD64), Fc $\gamma$ RIIa (CD32a), Fc $\gamma$ RIIc (CD32c), Fc $\gamma$ RIIIa (CD16a) et Fc $\gamma$ RIIIb (CD16b), ainsi que le récepteur inhibiteur Fc $\gamma$ RIIb (CD32b); chacun possédant un profil d'expression cellulaire et des fonctions différentes dans la réponse immunitaire ([1249](#)). À l'exception du Fc $\gamma$ RI, les Fc $\gamma$ Rs ont une faible affinité pour les IgG et n'engagent pas les IgG monomères dans des conditions physiologiques ([1249](#)). Ces récepteurs détectent plutôt la présence de complexes immuns multimériques, ce qui fournit une avidité suffisante aux monomères de Fc $\gamma$ R pour s'agglomérer et



**Figure 1.1.11 - Fonctions effectrices médiées par le fragment Fc des IgG.**

Représentation schématique des processus d'élimination des cellules infectées médiés par la portion Fc des anticorps. (1) La cytotoxicité cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCC) dépend du recrutement de cellules effectrices comme les cellules NK capables d'induire l'apoptose des cellules infectées par la dégranulation de granzymes et perforines. (2) La phagocytose cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCP) dépend du recrutement de cellules phagocytaires capables de dégrader la cellule infectée via une voie d'endocytose menant au phagolysosome. (3) La lyse par le complément dépendante des anticorps (ADCML) dépend du recrutement du complexe d'attaque membranaire menant à la lyse osmotique des cellules infectées. Diagramme créé avec [BioRender.com](https://www.biorender.com).

déclencher l'activation de la cellule effectrice via des motifs ITAM ([1250](#), [1251](#)). De plus, les FcγRs possèdent une affinité supérieure pour les portions Fc des isotypes IgG1 et IgG3 comparativement aux IgG2 et IgG4 ([1252](#)). Plusieurs facteurs peuvent influencer l'activation des fonctions effectrices Fc-dépendantes dans le contexte de l'infection par le VIH-1. En ce sens, la stœchiométrie et l'orientation des anticorps liés à l'antigène représentent des paramètres importants pouvant dicter l'accessibilité des domaines Fc pour engager les FcγRs ([1227](#), [1228](#)). L'interaction IgG-FcγR est également influencée par la composition du glycan N297 de la portion Fc,

notamment par l'absence de fucose qui permet une meilleure affinité pour le Fc $\gamma$ RIIIa, et donc une fonctionnalité supérieure ([1253-1256](#)). La magnitude des fonctions effectrices est également influencée par la présence de polymorphismes mononucléotidiques (SNP) dans les allèles du Fc $\gamma$ RIIIa (V/F158) et du Fc $\gamma$ RIIa (H/R131) qui module l'affinité globale pour la portion Fc et la spécificité isotypique pour les IgG ([1257-1259](#)).

La réponse ADCC est médiée par des cellules effectrices, typiquement par les cellules NK, mais également par les monocytes, les macrophages et les neutrophiles, qui s'activent via l'engagement du récepteur activateur Fc $\gamma$ RIIIa et libèrent des molécules cytotoxiques pour éliminer les cellules infectées par un virus ([1260](#)). Dans le cas des cellules NK, il s'agit de granules cytolytiques comportant des granzymes et perforines qui sont capables d'induire l'apoptose de la cellule infectée. Certains récepteurs activateurs des cellules NK, tel que NKG2D, peuvent agir à titre de corécepteur à CD16 pour faciliter le déclenchement de la réponse ADCC ([1087](#), [1261](#)). La réponse ADCP est médiée par des cellules phagocytaires incluant les monocytes, les macrophages, les cellules dendritiques, les neutrophiles et les éosinophiles, principalement via l'activation du Fc $\gamma$ RIIa ou du Fc $\gamma$ RI ([1262](#)). L'engagement du Fc $\gamma$ R permet l'internalisation de la cellule infectée et sa dégradation dans les phagolysosomes. En plus de mener à l'élimination de la cellule infectée, cela stimule la présentation antigénique aux lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> et CD8<sup>+</sup> par les cellules présentatrices d'antigènes ([1263](#)). Les réponses ADCC et ADCP peuvent également être médiées par l'interaction des IgA-avec le Fc $\alpha$ R présents à la surface de certaines cellules myéloïdes ([1264-1267](#)). Enfin, la réponse ADCML ne nécessite pas de cellules effectrices, mais dépend plutôt de l'activation de la cascade du complément ([1268](#)). La voie classique du complément est initiée par la reconnaissance des IgG agglomérés à la surface des cellules infectées par la molécule C1q, ce qui mène à la formation de la C3 convertase ([1269](#)). Le clivage du facteur C3 en C3a et C3b permet la déposition du C3b à la surface de la cellule infectée, se liant à la C3 convertase pour former la C5 convertase ([1270](#)). Le clivage du facteur C5 déclenche l'assemblage du complexe d'attaque membranaire (MAC) par les facteurs C5b, C6, C7 et C8, qui servent de plateforme pour l'oligomérisation du facteur C9 sous forme de pore transmembranaire permettant la lyse osmotique de la cellule infectée ([1271](#)). Toutefois, la présence de CD59 à la surface cellulaire empêche la lyse en inhibant la polymérisation du MAC ([1272-1276](#)). Dans l'article de revue présent à la fin du chapitre I (**article 1**), la contribution des fonctions effectrices Fc-dépendantes des anticorps au

niveau de la protection contre la transmission du VIH-1, le contrôle de la virémie et la progression de la maladie est discutée en détail. On y retrouve également un sommaire des différents mécanismes utilisés par le VIH-1 pour évader les réponses humorales neutralisantes et non-neutralisantes. Le développement de nouvelles stratégies expérimentales afin d'optimiser l'élimination des cellules infectées par les nnAbs et les bNAbs y est également présenté.

### **1.3 Traitements contre le VIH-1**

En 2022, aucun vaccin efficace ou traitement menant à la guérison de l'infection par le VIH-1 n'ont été établis. Bien que les symptômes de la maladie et la charge virale puissent être supprimés par le traitement ART, la nécessité d'un traitement curatif demeure, car les personnes infectées abritent toujours des cellules réservoirs infectées ([1277](#)). Ainsi, le succès du traitement ART a transformé l'infection par le VIH-1 d'une maladie mortelle en une maladie chronique, ce qui rend nécessaire la prise d'ARV à vie pour empêcher le rebond viral à partir des réservoirs. Cependant, la thérapie à vie nécessite une adhésion stricte au traitement et peut occasionner des effets secondaires indésirables dus à sa toxicité et l'apparition de multirésistance aux ARV ([1278](#), [1279](#)). Avec la suppression de la réplication du VIH-1 induite par le traitement ART, le nombre de lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> en circulation se stabilise à des niveaux relativement normaux chez la majorité des individus infectés. Cependant, de nombreux patients traités ne réussissant pas à récupérer des comptes normaux de lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> présentent un syndrome de dysrégulation immunitaire résiduelle (RIDS), qui se caractérise par une inflammation et une coagulopathie accrues, associées à une morbidité et une mortalité élevées ([1280](#)). Plusieurs stratégies vaccinales et thérapeutiques sont actuellement à l'essai dans le but d'éradiquer le VIH-1 pour de bon.

#### **1.3.1 Thérapie antirétrovirale**

La compréhension de la biologie du VIH-1 a conduit à la découverte de médicaments antirétroviraux ciblant diverses étapes du cycle de réplication, notamment l'entrée, la transcription inverse, la décapsidation, l'intégration et la maturation, et au moins trente d'entre eux sont actuellement approuvés par la U.S. FDA ([1281](#)). Les premiers ARVs ont été développés pour inhiber l'activité des différentes enzymes du VIH-1 (RT, IN, PR) et sont encore aujourd'hui les plus utilisés dans les traitements ART combinatoires ([1282](#)). Les inhibiteurs nucléosidiques de la transcriptase inverse (NRTI) sont des analogues de nucléosides qui peuvent être incorporés dans

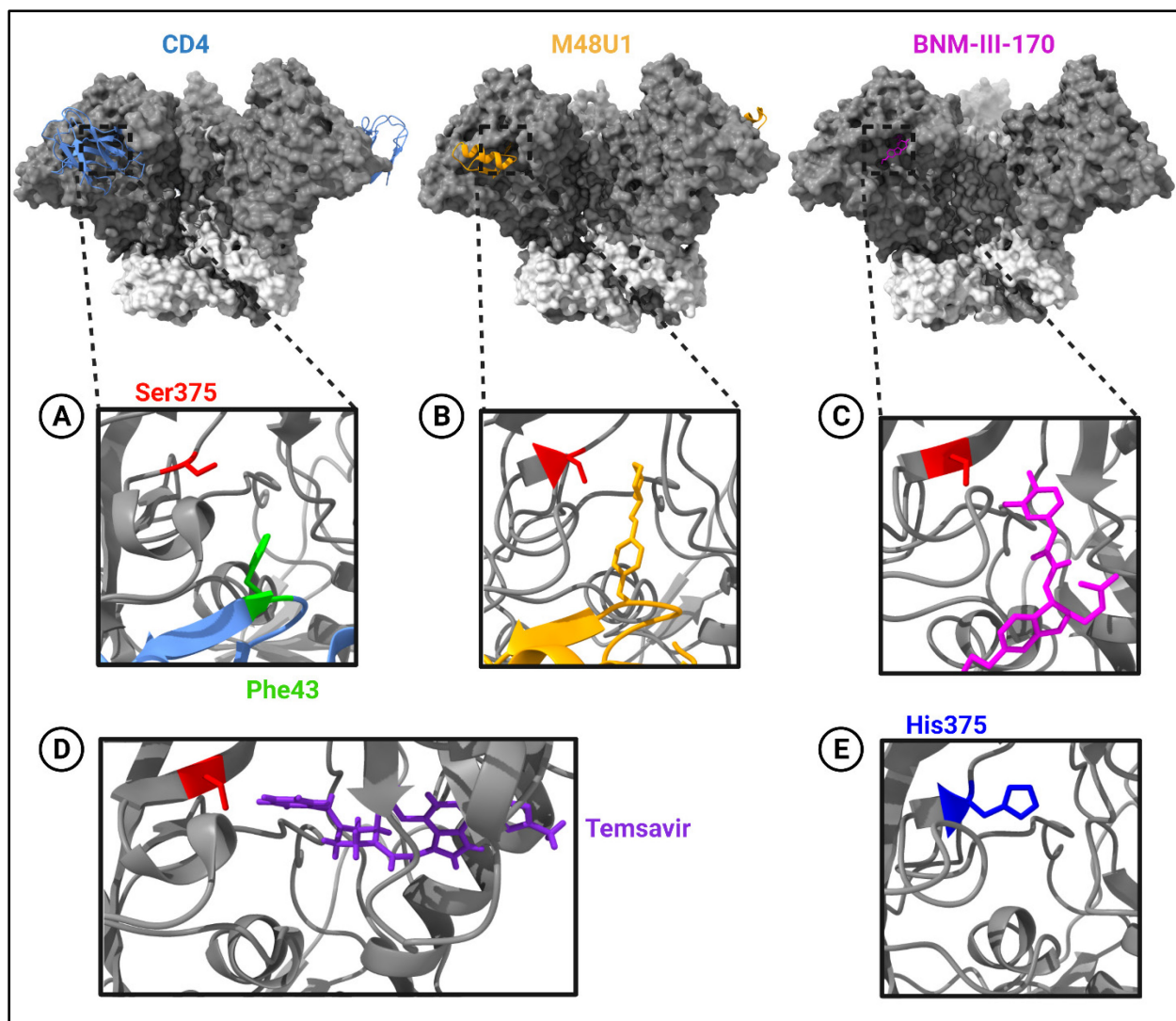
le génome viral lors de la rétrotranscription et provoquer la terminaison de la synthèse d'ADN en raison de l'absence ou le remplacement du groupement hydroxyle en 3' ([1283](#), [1284](#)). Les inhibiteurs non-nucléosidiques de la transcriptase inverse (NNRTI) perturbent l'activité catalytique de la RT par leur interaction avec un site allostérique qui déforme la cavité du site actif ([1285](#), [1286](#)). Les inhibiteurs du transfert de brin par l'intégrase (INSTI) se lient au complexe formé par l'IN et l'ADNv, et interagissent avec les ions de magnésium qui servent de cofacteurs du site actif permettant la capture de l'ADN cellulaire ([1287](#), [1288](#)). Une nouvelle classe d'inhibiteurs allostériques de l'intégrase (ALLINI) bloquant l'interaction avec LEDGF et induisant la mutimérisation aberrante d'IN est présentement à l'étude ([1289-1292](#)). Les inhibiteurs de protéase (PI) s'insèrent dans la cavité à l'interface du dimère de PR et interagissent avec les résidus d'aspartates conservés du site catalytique ([1293](#), [1294](#)). Le processus de maturation est également ciblé par une nouvelle classe d'inhibiteurs perturbant spécifiquement le clivage entre CA et SP1 et ceux-ci sont présentement en phase clinique ([1295-1297](#)). Suivant les recommandations du *Center for Disease Control and Prevention* (CDC), la trithérapie conventionnelle est composée de deux NRTIs en combinaison avec un NNRTI, un INSTI ou un PI ([1298](#)). Or, l'émergence de multirésistance chez certains patients a forcé le développement de nouvelles classes d'inhibiteurs ciblant les protéines structurales du VIH-1. Les inhibiteurs d'entrée peuvent agir au niveau de l'attachement ou de la fusion virale en ciblant Env ou un de ses récepteurs ([1299](#)). La plus récente classe d'inhibiteurs ayant démontré son efficacité est dirigée contre la capsid virale, et ceux-ci empêchent la décapsidation et la relâche de l'ADNv dans le noyau en augmentant la stabilité de la capsid ([1300-1304](#)). Il n'existe toujours pas d'inhibiteurs autorisés ciblant les protéines régulatrices (Tat, Rev) ou les protéines accessoires (Vif, Vpr, Vpu, Nef) du VIH-1. Une seule molécule ciblant Vpu (BIT225) est actuellement testée en essai clinique, mais avec une activité antivirale mitigée ([1305-1309](#)).

### **1.3.1.1 Inhibiteurs d'entrée virale**

La caractérisation du mécanisme multifactoriel d'entrée du VIH-1 dans la cellule hôte a révélé une série de processus critiques qui pourraient être perturbés par des moyens pharmacologiques. En plus des anticorps neutralisants, plusieurs molécules ont été développées pour bloquer l'entrée du VIH-1 dans les cellules cibles, connues collectivement sous le nom d'inhibiteurs d'entrée, mais constituant un groupe complexe de médicaments dont les mécanismes

d'action sont multiples et dépendent de l'étape du processus d'entrée à laquelle ils agissent et de la protéine ciblée. Il existe présentement quatre inhibiteurs de l'entrée du VIH-1 approuvés par la U.S. FDA qui se répartissent en quatre classes distinctes : les inhibiteurs d'attachement, les inhibiteurs post-attachement, les antagonistes de CCR5 et les inhibiteurs de fusion.

L'inhibiteur d'attachement fostemsavir (BMS-663068) a été approuvé en 2020 pour le traitement de l'infection par le VIH-1 chez les personnes ayant développé une résistance à plusieurs ARV et disposant d'options de traitement limitées ([1310](#)). Temsavir (BMS-626529), le composé actif du promédicament fostemsavir, empêche l'interaction entre Env et CD4 en s'insérant sous la boucle  $\beta$ 20- $\beta$ 21 du CD4BS de la gp120, de manière orthogonale à la cavité Phe43 hydrophobe ([1311](#)). Cet inhibiteur maintient le trimère d'Env dans sa conformation « fermée » en empêchant la liaison à CD4 de manière allostérique et en prévenant la formation du site de liaison au corécepteur ([217](#), [1311-1314](#)). De même, la cavité Phe43 est ciblée par plusieurs autres composés présentement en développement pré-clinique, mais ceux-ci agissent plutôt en tant qu'agoniste de CD4 (**Figure 1.1.12**). À l'instar de CD4, les miniprotéines de CD4 et les mimétiques moléculaires de CD4 (CD4mc) s'insèrent directement dans la cavité Phe43 et déclenchent des changements de conformation exposant les épitopes CD4i ([1315-1317](#)). En plus de compétitionner avec CD4 pour son site de liaison, l'activation prématurée de la conformation « ouverte » d'Env par les CD4mc provoque le détachement de la gp120, ce qui inactive Env de manière irréversible ([1318-1320](#)). Les études utilisant les CD4mc dans des modèles animaux ont démontré que ces composés étaient capables de prévenir l'infection par le VIH-1, contrôler la charge virale et réduire la taille des réservoirs viraux lorsqu'utilisés en combinaison avec des anticorps non-neutralisants ([1321-1325](#)). Ces inhibiteurs ont été optimisés afin de présenter un large groupement hydrophobe se projetant profondément dans la cavité Phe43 et leur permettant d'atteindre le fond de la cavité où se trouve le résidu 375 ([1326-1328](#)). Ces projections pénètrent plus profondément dans la cavité Phe43 que le résidu Phe43 lui-même, ce qui rend ces molécules plus sensibles aux changements survenant dans la cavité, comme la présence de résidus volumineux à la position 375 capables de remplir la cavité ([1226](#), [1320](#), [1329-1332](#)). La majorité des souches du VIH-1 en circulation présentent un petit résidu sérine à cette position (Ser375), avec l'exception du clade CRF01\_AE qui possèdent un résidu histidine largement conservé (His375), ce qui leur confère une résistance aux CD4mc, mais également à temsavir ([1328](#), [1333](#), [1334](#)).



**Figure 1.1.12 – Inhibiteurs d’entrée ciblant la cavité Phe43 de l’Env du VIH-1.**

(A) Le récepteur CD4 interagit avec l’Env du VIH-1 via l’insertion de son résidu Phe43 dans la cavité Phe43 de la gp120. Plusieurs inhibiteurs d’entrée ciblent également cette cavité. (B) Les miniprotéines de CD4 (comme M48U1) et (C) les mimétiques moléculaires de CD4 (comme BNM-III-170) s’insèrent dans cette cavité et permettent l’adoption de la conformation « ouverte ». (D) La molécule tamsavir s’insère de manière orthogonale à l’ouverture de la cavité Phe43 et stabilise la conformation « fermée ». (E) Contrairement, aux autres clades du VIH-1 qui possèdent une sérine en position 375, l’Env des souches CRF01\_AE possède une histidine à cette position. Les représentations structurales ont été générées à l’aide du logiciel ChimeraX v1.3 à partir de structures disponibles dans la base de données RCSB PDB. Les structures utilisées sont celles d’une Env du clade A liée à CD4 et E51 (PDB : 6U0L), M48U1 et 17b (PDB : 7LOK), BNM-III-170 et 17b (PDB : 7LO6) ou tamsavir, PGT122 et 35022 (PDB : 5U7O) ainsi que la structure d’une Env du clade CRF01\_AE liée à 8ANC195 (PDB : 6NQD). Pour CD4, la densité visible provient uniquement de son domaine D1. Les densités associées aux anticorps ont été enlevées pour une question de clarté. La sous-unité gp120 est illustrée en gris foncé et la gp41 est illustrée en gris pâle. Diagramme créé avec [BioRender.com](https://www.biorender.com/).

L'ibalizumab, premier anticorps monoclonal de type IgG4 approuvé en 2018 pour le traitement de l'infection par le VIH-1, est un inhibiteur d'entrée post-attachement dirigé contre CD4 qui bloque l'entrée du VIH-1 dans les cellules cibles tout en préservant sa fonction immunitaire normale ([1335](#)). L'ibalizumab se lie au domaine D2 de CD4, permettant la liaison du domaine D1 à l'Env du VIH-1, mais empêchant les étapes ultérieures nécessaires à l'entrée du virus ([1336](#)). Son utilisation dans la trithérapie est également réservée pour le traitement d'infections multirésistantes en échec de leur traitement ART initial ([1337](#), [1338](#)). Le maraviroc, approuvé en 2007, appartient à la classe des antagonistes de CCR5 et son utilisation est strictement limitée aux individus infectés par des souches à tropisme R5 ([1339](#), [1340](#)). Cette molécule s'insère dans la pochette hydrophobe centrale du CCR5, délimitée par ses sept hélices transmembranaires, et compétitionne directement pour l'interaction entre CCR5 et la boucle V3 de la gp120 ([224](#), [1341](#)). Des antagonistes de CXCR4 ont été développés de manière similaire, mais ont échoué dans les essais cliniques ([1342](#), [1343](#)). Également capable de bloquer l'interaction entre Env et CCR5, le leronlimab, un anticorps monoclonal de type IgG4, est présentement en essai clinique pour être utilisé chez les patients dont la charge virale est indétectable ([1344](#), [1345](#)). Du côté des inhibiteurs de fusion, on retrouve l'enfuvirtide (T20), premier ARV ciblant l'entrée approuvé en 2003, qui est un peptide de 36 acides aminés analogue au domaine HR2 de la gp41 capable d'empêcher les réarrangements structurels nécessaires à la formation du 6HB en se liant de manière complémentaire au domaine HR1 ([1346](#), [1347](#)). Son utilisation dans le traitement ART est devenue très limitée à cause de l'émergence rapide de mutations échappatoires et une demi-vie très courte dans l'organisme ([1348-1350](#)). Les inhibiteurs de fusion de deuxième génération comme l'albuvirtide, un peptide de HR2 couplé à l'albumine, et le LP-98, un peptide complémentaire à HR1 couplé au cholestérol, ont démontré une activité antivirale et une demi-vie supérieures comparativement au T20 et sont présentement en développement clinique et pré-clinique, respectivement ([1351-1353](#)).

### **1.3.2 Stratégies de vaccination contre le VIH-1**

Un vaccin préventif efficace n'a toujours pas été trouvé et, à ce jour, plusieurs candidats ont fait l'objet d'essais cliniques de phases 2 et 3, parmi lesquels seul l'essai vaccinal RV144 a démontré une efficacité modeste de 31,2 % sur un suivi de trois ans ([78](#)). Les deux premiers essais d'efficacité (Vax003 et Vax004) visaient à induire une réponse humorale contre un vaccin bivalent



composé de gp120 monomériques recombinantes (AIDSVAX) (72). Malheureusement, l'analyse des données en a révélé que les deux vaccins n'arrivaient pas à produire des bNAbs chez les vaccinés et donc ne prévenaient pas l'acquisition du VIH-1 ou la progression de la maladie (74, 75). Par la suite, les essais vaccinaux STEP et Phambili visaient à induire une réponse à médiation cellulaire par les lymphocytes CD8<sup>+</sup> en utilisant des vecteurs adénoviraux recombinants (rAd5) codant pour les protéines virales Gag, Pol et Nef (1354, 1355). Ces essais n'ont démontré aucune protection globale, augmentant même le risque d'infection chez les individus présentant une immunité préexistante contre le vecteur (76, 77, 1356). De manière similaire, l'essai vaccinal HVTN 505 (*HIV Vaccine Trials Network 505*) proposait un vaccin à base d'ADN recombinant codant pour les protéines Gag, Pol, Env et Nef, suivi d'une dose de rappel avec un rAd5 exprimant Gag, Pol et Env; toutefois, cet essai n'a démontré aucune efficacité (1357).

En utilisant une approche pour induire une réponse immunitaire humorale et cellulaire, l'essai vaccinal RV144 réalisé en Thaïlande était basé sur un vaccin combinant un vecteur poxvirus recombinant (ALVAC-HIV) encodant les gènes structuraux *gag*, *pol* et *env*, suivi de doses de rappel avec de la gp120 recombinante (AIDSVAX). Cette étude a fourni les premières preuves cliniques de l'efficacité d'un vaccin contre le VIH-1 en démontrant une efficacité de 60,5 % au cours de la première année, qui est ensuite descendue à 31,2 % trois ans après la vaccination (78, 1358). Les corrélats immunitaires de la protection observée étaient principalement les réponses IgG spécifiques à la boucle V1/V2 de la gp120 et une forte réponse ADCC chez les participants ayant une réponse IgA réduite (1359, 1360). Le déclin rapide de l'efficacité du vaccin RV144 a mené à de nouvelles études (RV305 et RV306) dans le but d'administrer des doses de rappel du vaccin afin de fournir une protection plus durable, mais les réponses immunitaires induites se sont avérées transitoires (1361, 1362). Les résultats prometteurs de l'essai RV144 ont suscité l'intérêt d'évaluer son efficacité contre d'autres clades. En fait, le vaccin du RV144 était conçu à l'origine pour protéger contre l'infection par les souches du clade CRF01\_AE circulants en Thaïlande et a été adapté plus tard pour cibler les souches du clade C dans l'essai vaccinal HVTN 702 (Uhombu) réalisé en Afrique du Sud (1363). Cet essai vaccinal a récemment été interrompu en 2020 pour cause de futilité après qu'une analyse intermédiaire n'ait révélé aucune prévention de l'infection (1364). Les essais vaccinaux en cours misent maintenant sur l'induction d'une réponse immunitaire à large spectre. Les essais HVTN 705 (Imbokodo) et HVTN 706 (Mosaico) sont

conçus à partir d'un vaccin à base de vecteurs adénoviraux (Ad26) codant pour les protéines Gag, Pol et Env et un rappel à base de protéines d'Env recombinantes (gp140), dont les séquences ont été optimisées *in silico* afin de refléter la diversité des différents clades ([1365-1367](#)). Bien que l'essai HVTN 706 ne soit toujours pas terminé ([ClinicalTrials.gov](#) : NCT03964415), l'essai HVTN 705 a été interrompu en août 2021 à cause d'une efficacité vaccinale insuffisante (25,2 %) deux ans après le début de la vaccination ([1368](#)). Le dernier essai vaccinal en lice (PrEPVacc) mise sur l'utilisation de plusieurs stratégies déjà éprouvées (vaccin à ADN, vecteur poxvirus (MVA) et protéines recombinantes d'Env) en combinaison avec un traitement ART préventif (PrEP) ([ClinicalTrials.gov](#) : NCT04066881). Les résultats de cette étude sont attendus pour 2023.

Les défis à relever pour développer un vaccin efficace sont principalement dus à la variabilité du virus, en particulier d'Env, ainsi qu'à l'identification concluante des corrélats immunitaires de protection. Si un vaccin pouvait stimuler la production de bNAbs, il pourrait possiblement conférer une protection contre l'infection par le VIH-1 ([1369](#)). Le développement d'un immunogène à partir du trimère d'Env représente un des enjeux principaux dans l'élaboration des approches vaccinales de nouvelles générations. Plusieurs défis se sont imposés dans la caractérisation de l'arrangement structurel d'un trimère d'Env pré-fusion soluble, en raison de sa conformation métastable, sa lourde glycosylation et l'interaction non-covalente entre les différentes sous-unités du trimère. Depuis 2013, une forme soluble du trimère d'Env (connue sous le nom de SOSIP.664), dérivée de la séquence de l'isolat de clade A BG505 et stabilisée par l'introduction de ponts disulfure artificiels entre les sous-unités gp120 et gp41 (SOS), grâce aux mutations A501C et T605C, en combinaison avec la mutation I559P (IP) dans le domaine HR1, est utilisée pour des études structurales ([185](#), [186](#)). Bien que le trimère reste intact en solution, l'introduction des mutations SOSIP entraîne une déstabilisation de la conformation native d'Env et un profil de glycosylation aberrant ([403](#), [1370-1373](#)). Les études utilisant le trimère SOSIP.664 en tant qu'immunogène vaccinal dans des modèles animaux ont montré qu'il induisait presque uniquement des anticorps neutralisants autologues ou dirigés contre la base du trimère ([1140](#), [1374-1376](#)). Un autre défi dans la génération de bNAbs par vaccination est la stimulation des lignées germinales de lymphocytes B naïfs codant pour les précurseurs de bNAbs. En ce moment, l'approche privilégiée pour la génération de bNAbs passe par l'activation des lignées germinales suivie d'une maturation séquentielle guidée par des immunogènes trimériques d'Env ([1377-1383](#)).

Bien que ces stratégies aient donné des résultats mitigés dans les modèles animaux, les premiers essais cliniques de phase 1 sont présentement en cours afin d'évaluer leur efficacité pour induire des bNAbs chez l'humain, notamment via l'utilisation de vaccins à base d'ARNm ([ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov) : NCT03547245, NCT04224701, NCT05001373, NCT05217641) qui ont montré des résultats prometteurs dans des études pré-cliniques ([1384-1386](#)).

### 1.3.3 Stratégies de guérison du VIH-1

En termes généraux, pour obtenir une guérison du VIH-1, il faut soit une éradication complète du réservoir latent (guérison stérilisante), soit un contrôle à long terme de la réplication virale en l'absence d'ART (guérison fonctionnelle). En 2022, quatre personnes sont considérées guéries du VIH-1 : le « patient de Berlin », le « patient de Londres », le patient de « Düsseldorf » et la « patiente de New York » ([79-83](#)). Tous ont développé une leucémie myéloïde aiguë ou un lymphome de Hodgkin et ont été traités par des immunosuppresseurs, suivis d'une transplantation allogénique de cellules souches hématopoïétiques en utilisant des donneurs présentant une mutation homozygote du gène CCR5 ( $CCR5^{\Delta32/\Delta32}$ ), ce qui confère une résistance à l'infection du VIH-1 par les souches à tropisme R5 ([1387-1389](#)). Le traitement antirétroviral a été interrompu plusieurs mois après la transplantation et les quatre individus étaient en rémission avec une charge virale plasmatique indétectable. Cependant, ce traitement n'est pas une option viable pour toutes les personnes infectées, étant donné le risque élevé de complications pendant la transplantation de cellules souches et la difficulté de trouver des donneurs histocompatibles et homozygotes pour la mutation  $CCR5^{\Delta32/\Delta32}$  ([1390](#)). Entre autres, un autre patient traité avec des cellules souches  $CCR5^{\Delta32/\Delta32}$  a souffert d'un éventuel rebond viral de souches à tropisme X4 ([1391](#)). Basé sur ces succès, des stratégies de guérison utilisant la thérapie génique visent à d'introduire la mutation  $CCR5^{\Delta32/\Delta32}$ . À cet effet, plusieurs méthodes moléculaires permettant la modification du génome de l'hôte sont à l'essai, telles que les nucléases à doigt de zinc (ZFN) ou la technologie CRISPR-Cas9, mais leurs taux de modification *in vivo* restent insuffisants pour le moment pour conférer une résistance complète à l'infection ([1392](#), [1393](#)).

De manière encourageante, deux cas de guérison spontanée ont été caractérisés chez des contrôleurs élites exceptionnels dans la dernière année : la patiente de San Francisco et la patiente d'Esperanza ([846](#), [847](#)). En absence de traitement ART, ces dernières ne présentent aucune virémie

délectable depuis 12 ans et 8 ans, respectivement, et aucun provirus intact compétent pour la réplication n'a été détecté dans plus d'un milliard de cellules de sang périphériques analysées ([846](#), [847](#)). Étant donné la complexité associée à l'élimination complète des réservoirs viraux, la guérison fonctionnelle semble une approche plus réaliste. La diminution de la taille des réservoirs du VIH-1 de manière préventive ou active pourrait être suffisante afin de permettre au système immunitaire de contrôler la réplication virale et d'empêcher la progression de la maladie en l'absence du traitement ART. Notamment, l'initiation de la thérapie antirétrovirale dans la phase précoce de l'infection a été liée à la réduction de l'établissement des réservoirs du VIH-1 ([1394-1396](#)) et à un contrôle prolongé du rebond viral suite à l'interruption du traitement ART chez les contrôleurs post-traitement, tels qu'observés chez trois cas pédiatriques infectés de manière périnatale et traités intensivement dès leurs premiers mois de vie([1397-1399](#)) et chez des patients adultes de la cohorte « *Viro-Immunologic Sustained Control after Treatment Interruption* » (VISCONTI) et de la cohorte « *Control of HIV After Antiretroviral Medication Pause* » (CHAMP) ([1025](#), [1400](#)). Cependant, un rebond viral a fini par se produire éventuellement dans ces cas ([1401](#)).

Les plus récentes stratégies thérapeutiques expérimentales pour permettre une guérison fonctionnelle se classent dans deux idéologies différentes : les stratégies « *shock and kill* » qui visent l'élimination active des réservoirs et les stratégies « *block and lock* » qui visent plutôt à bloquer l'expression virale de manière permanente. Les stratégies « *shock and kill* » nécessitent la réactivation de l'expression du provirus à partir de son état latent à l'aide d'agents d'inversion de la latence (LRA) en présence de traitement ART pour empêcher l'infection de nouvelles cellules ([1402](#)). Certaines molécules agissant sur le plan épigénétique sont utilisées pour prévenir la formation d'hétérochromatine, incluant des inhibiteurs d'histone désacétylase (HDAC) comme le vorinostat, le panabinostat et la romidepsine ([1403-1405](#)), tandis que d'autres agissent au niveau de l'activation transcriptionnelle du provirus via la libération du complexe P-TEFb actif ([1406](#)) et l'activation de la voie NF- $\kappa$ B; ceux-ci incluent les agonistes de la protéine kinase C (PKC) comme la bryostatine, la prostratine et l'ingénol ([1407](#), [1408](#)), les mimétiques de SMAC ([1409](#)) et les agonistes de TLR ([1410-1413](#)). Suite à la réactivation de l'expression virale, les réservoirs cellulaires doivent être éliminés par le système immunitaire. L'élimination des cellules infectées peut être augmentée par l'administration de bNAbs, de lymphocytes exprimant un récepteur antigénique chimérique ou d'immunomodulateurs augmentant les fonctions effectrices, incluant

les agonistes de TLR, les IFN-I et l'IL-15 ([1199](#), [1410](#), [1414-1418](#)). Les stratégies « *block and lock* » visent à réduire au silence la transcription du VIH-1 en bloquant le promoteur dans une latence profonde à l'aide d'agents favorisant la latence (LPA) ([1419](#)). Les inhibiteurs de Tat, les inhibiteurs de kinase et les ARN d'interférence sont des exemples de LPA ([1420-1424](#)). En stimulant la latence virale et en la rendant irréversible, il pourrait être possible d'arrêter le traitement ART sans rebond viral et d'établir une rémission prolongée sans médicament.

## **ARTICLE 1**

**Impact de la conformation de l'enveloppe du VIH-1 dans la réponse ADCC**

## *Impact of HIV-1 Envelope Conformation on ADCC Responses*

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### **Commentaire :**

Cette revue de littérature présente un sommaire des principaux concepts abordés dans les prochains chapitres de cette thèse concernant la réponse anticorps dirigée contre les glycoprotéines d'enveloppe du VIH-1. On y aborde les rôles clés joués par la conformation d'Env et de l'expression des protéines accessoires Nef et Vpu. Ceux-ci dictent la reconnaissance antigénique par les différentes classes d'anticorps neutralisants (bNAbs) et non-neutralisants (nnAbs) et la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC. Nous explorons les différentes stratégies expérimentales utilisées afin d'optimiser l'élimination des cellules infectées par les bNAbs et les nnAbs. Cet article présente également une comparaison détaillée des différentes techniques de laboratoire utilisées pour mesurer la réponse ADCC et de leur pertinence biologique.

### 1.4.1 RÉSUMÉ

Les glycoprotéines d'enveloppe du VIH-1 (Env) représentent le seul antigène spécifique du virus exposé à la surface des cellules infectées. Dans sa forme non-liée, l'Env de virus primaires adopte la conformation « fermée » (conformation 1), qui est reconnue préférentiellement par les anticorps neutralisants à large spectre (bNAbs). L'interaction avec CD4 fait passer Env dans une conformation intermédiaire « partiellement ouverte » (conformation 2), puis dans la conformation « ouverte » liée à CD4 (conformation 3). De nouvelles données suggèrent l'existence d'un lien entre la conformation d'Env et la réponse cytotoxique cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCC). Les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 exposant Env dans la conformation liée à CD4 sont sensibles à l'ADCC médiée par les anticorps non-neutralisants (nnAbs) et le sérum d'individus infectés par le VIH. Les cellules exposant Env dans la conformation « fermée » sont sensibles à l'ADCC médiée par les bNAbs. Nous examinons ici comment la conformation d'Env affecte la réponse ADCC et sa quantification *in vitro*.

### 1.4.2 ABSTRACT

HIV-1 envelope glycoproteins (Env) represent the only virus-specific antigen exposed at the surface of infected cells. In its unliganded form, Env from primary viruses samples a 'closed' conformation (State 1), which is preferentially recognized by broadly neutralizing antibodies (bNAbs). CD4 engagement drives Env into an intermediate 'partially open' (State 2) and then into the 'open' CD4-bound conformation (State 3). Emerging evidence suggests a link between Env conformation and Ab-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC). HIV-1-infected cells exposing Env in the CD4-bound conformation are susceptible to ADCC mediated by CD4-induced Abs and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. Cells exposing State 1 Env are susceptible to ADCC mediated by bNAbs. Here, we discuss how Env conformation affects ADCC responses and *in vitro* measurements.



### 1.4.3 MAIN TEXT

#### **Impact of Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity on HIV-1 Replication and Transmission**

HIV-1 continues to infect more than 1.8 million individuals annually, with an estimated total of 36.7 million people living with this virus in 2016<sup>i</sup>. Enormous effort has been made to improve the clinical management of HIV/AIDS through highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART). Accordingly, HIV-1 infection can be controlled with HAART and, in most cases, allows for a significant increase in the life expectancy of infected individuals [1]. However, viral rebounds can occur upon HAART interruption due to the presence of latent viral reservoirs [2,3], persisting mainly in long-lived memory CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells [4]. Efforts to design efficient preventive or curative strategies have yet to produce results in the clinic. Identifying and characterizing the immune functions needed to establish a protective immunity and understanding how the virus responds and protects itself from these immune functions represent a highly complex, multifaceted problem.

At the time of writing, only one anti-HIV-1 vaccine trial, the RV144 Thai trial (see Glossary), has presented a modest (31.2%) efficacy in preventing infection by HIV-1 [5]. Interestingly, correlates of protection in this trial suggested that increased ADCC could be linked with decreased HIV-1 acquisition [6] and Abs with potent ADCC activity were isolated from some RV144 vaccinees [7]. ADCC is thought to represent an important immune effector function in the protection and control of different viral infections and could be mediated by natural killer (NK) cells, monocytes/macrophages, or neutrophils [8–11]. Decreased viral load, rate of disease progression, and decreased mother–child transmission correlated with Fc-mediated effector functions in HIV-1 and simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV) infections in some [12–22], but not in all studies [23–25]. Of note, Fc-mediated effector functions appear to be important against not only infected cells, but also free virus [26]. While some studies failed to show that passive administration of non-neutralizing Abs (nnAbs) presenting ADCC activity could confer protection against SIV or simian-HIV (SHIV) challenges in macaque models [27–30], a recent study clearly indicated that nnAbs could alter the course of HIV-1 infection in humanized mice [31]. Supporting an important role of ADCC in preventing viral transmission, a recent pentavalent HIV-1 vaccine

was shown to protect 55% of pentavalent vaccine-immunized rhesus macaques from SHIV challenge. Systems serology of the Ab responses in this study identified ADCC activity as one of the four main immunological parameters able to predict decreased infection risk [32].

## Env Conformation

The HIV-1 Env trimer mediates viral entry. HIV-1 Env is formed by three exterior gp120 and three transmembrane gp41 subunits, which are noncovalently associated [33–35]. Interaction of gp120 with the CD4 receptor triggers major conformational changes in Env, including movement of the V1/V2 and V3 loops, and formation of the co-receptor binding site (CoRBS) and the bridging sheet [36–43]. CD4 interaction also leads to the exposure of the gp41 helical heptad repeat (HR1) [44]. CCR5 or CXCR4 co-receptor interaction with gp120 promotes additional conformational changes in gp41, resulting in the formation of a six-helix bundle formed by HR1 and HR2 heptad repeats and in the fusion of viral and cellular membranes.

Env is a metastable molecule that transits from its unliganded ‘closed’ high-energy conformation (State 1) to its ‘open’ CD4-bound low-energy conformation (State 3). CD4 engagement drives Env into an intermediate ‘partially open’ conformation (State 2) and then into State 3 [45,46]. Env represents the only virus-specific antigen exposed at the surface of infected cells and, thus, represents a major target for ADCC. The unliganded Env of most primary clinical HIV1 isolates assumes a ‘closed’ State 1 conformation, which renders them relatively resistant to Ab attack (**Figure 1.2.1**) [46]. Despite different modes of recognition, multiple bNAbs preferentially recognize and stabilize this ‘closed’ conformation. By contrast, CD4 binding ‘opens’ Env by reorganizing the V1/V2 and V3 loops, resulting in the adoption of the CD4-bound conformation, referred to as State 3 (**Figure 1.2.1**) [45,46]. This conformation is efficiently recognized by ADCC-mediating Abs present in sera from HIV-1-infected individuals [47]. To avoid the exposure of these vulnerable epitopes, Env tightly controls its transition from State 1 to States 2/3. For instance, the V1/V2 and V3 loops have a critical role in keeping the trimer ‘closed’ [48–50], with well-conserved V2 residues restraining Env from sampling downstream States 2/3 conformations [45]. Additional elements participate in keeping Env in State 1, including the Phe43 cavity, a highly conserved approximately 150-Å<sup>3</sup> pocket located at the interface between the inner and outer domain of the gp120, which allows engagement to CD4 via its Phe43 residue [51].

Within this cavity, residue 375 impacts the conformation spontaneously sampled by Env. Most HIV-1 group M Envs have an ‘empty’ Phe43 cavity due to the presence of a small residue, such as serine, at position 375 (S375), which favors the adoption of State 1, therefore preventing transitions to downstream conformations [52,53] (**Figure 1.2.1**). Interestingly, substitution of S375 by large hydrophobic residues, such as histidine or tryptophan, ‘fills’ the Phe43 cavity and predisposes Env to spontaneously assume a state closer to the CD4-bound conformation [52] (**Figure 1.2.1**). Accordingly, CRF01\_AE Envs, which have a naturally occurring Phe43 cavity-filling residue at this position (H375), are better recognized by CD4-induced (CD4i) Abs than CRF01\_AE Envs having this residue replaced by a serine (H375S), resulting in enhanced ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera and anti-cluster A Abs [54].

Besides binding CD4, the Phe43 cavity is also the target of small CD4-mimetic compounds (CD4mc), which block the gp120–CD4 interaction, inducing thermodynamic changes in gp120 similar to those observed upon CD4 binding [55,56] and forcing Env to sample State 2/3 conformations [46] (**Figure 1.2.1**). In agreement with the susceptibility of the CD4-bound conformation of Env to ADCC responses [47], CD4mc sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC mediated by Abs present in sera, cervicovaginal fluids, and breast milk from HIV-1-infected individuals [57,58].

The conformation sampled by Env results from the balance between elements preventing the spontaneous adoption of the CD4-bound conformation, such as the V1/V2 V3 loops and S375 within the Phe43 cavity, and other elements facilitating this transition. Three topological layers (Layers 1, 2, and 3) in the gp120 inner domain facilitate Env transition to the CD4-bound conformation [53,59]. Accordingly, mutation of highly conserved residues at the interface between these layers, such as tryptophan 69 (W69, conservation of 99.8% based on the Los Alamos HIV database), decreases the adoption of this conformation and the recognition by CD4i ADCC-mediating Abs [60,61].

### **Role of HIV-1 Accessory Proteins in ADCC Responses**

HIV-1 limits the Env–CD4 interaction by downregulating CD4 and preventing Env accumulation at the surface of infected cells [47,61–64] (**Figure 1.2.2**). HIV-1 uses the accessory

proteins Nef and Vpu to reduce the surface expression of CD4, thus preventing the exposure of CD4i Env epitopes [47,61]. In addition to its role in preventing CD4 accumulation at the cell surface [65], Vpu promotes viral release by counteracting the restriction factor BST-2, thus preventing the accumulation of nascent virions on the surface of infected cells [66,67]. Supporting the role of Vpu in limiting antigen accumulation at the surface of infected cells, several studies showed that Vpu reduces Env recognition by ADCC-mediating Abs [47,61–64]. HIV-1 also controls Env accumulation at the cell surface through efficient Env internalization, which in turns limits ADCC responses [68]. Beside its capacity to limit ADCC responses by downregulating CD4 [61,69], Nef also interferes with NK cell activation by decreasing the expression of ligands for the NK cell receptor NKG2D [70]. Since NKG2D acts as a co-receptor for the CD16/Fc receptor (FcR) to mediate ADCC against HIV-1-infected cells [71], Nef-mediated downregulation of NKG2D ligands also contributes to protection from ADCC responses [72] (**Figure 1.2.2**). Together, these observations demonstrate the central role of Nef and Vpu in protecting HIV-1-infected cells from ADCC. Targeting these accessory proteins might help develop new strategies to eliminate HIV-1-infected cells.

### **CD4-Induced Antibodies**

One consequence of Env binding to CD4 is the exposure of numerous Env CD4i epitopes. Several families of Abs recognize different CD4i epitopes, including anti-CoRBS, anti-V1V2, anti-V3, anti-gp41, and anti-cluster A Abs. Here, we discuss the impact of two CD4i families of Abs (anti-cluster A and anti-CoRBS) on ADCC responses.

### **Anti-cluster A Antibodies**

Binding to CD4 causes conformational changes in Env and results in the exposure of concealed epitopes, including those located in the gp120 inner domain cluster A region. This region comprises the N- and C-terminal of gp120, the seven-stranded  $\beta$ -sandwich, and gp120 layers 1 and 2 [73]. This region was defined initially by the recognition of the A32 Ab [74,75], which binds the interface of gp120 inner domain layer 1 and layer 2, and C11, which is reported to bind the N termini [53,73,75–77]. Crystal structures of anti-cluster A N5i5 and 2.2c Abs in complex with gp120 cores and CD4 identified  $\alpha 0$  and  $\alpha 1$  helices in the C1 region as being critical for binding [78]. Importantly, the generation of a disulfide-linked stabilized gp120 inner domain

(ID) recently allowed the co-crystallization of A32 [79]. This new structure provided detailed information about the A32 epitope and confirmed previous mutagenesis data [53,60] that identified residue W69 as a key contact residue involved in ADCC responses mediated by anti-cluster A Abs [60]. While anti-cluster A Abs are unable to neutralize viral particles and, therefore, are known as nnAbs, several studies indicate that they can mediate potent ADCC if target cells expose Env in its CD4-bound conformation [47,54,57,60,61,69,79,80]. However, since their epitopes are occluded in the unliganded trimer, target cells exposing Env in State 1, such as cells infected with primary viruses, are resistant to ADCC mediated by these Abs [47,57,58,60,61,64,69,81–84] (**Figure 1.2.2**).

### **Co-receptor Binding Site Antibodies**

The CoRBS comprises the V3 loop and the ‘bridging sheet’, a structure formed by b-sheets from the V1/V2 loop stem and the  $\beta$ 20- $\beta$ 21 loop, which come together upon CD4 binding [51]. Since CoRBS Abs recognize this bridging sheet, which is exposed after CD4 binding, they are also known as CD4i Abs. Similar to anti-cluster A Abs, CoRBS Abs were shown to poorly recognize HIV-1-infected cells exposing Env in State 1 [60,81,84–86]. In addition, cells infected with viruses defective for Nef and Vpu are readily recognized by CoRBS Abs (**Figure 1.2.3**, Key Figure). However, despite good recognition of infected cells, CoRBS Abs are unable to mediate potent ADCC [60,80,84,85] (see **Outstanding Questions**). This paradox (i.e., good recognition of target cells but no ADCC activity) could be explained by the different angles of approach used by anti-cluster A Abs and CoRBS Abs to engage with Env and, therefore, expose their Fc portion to effector cells and crosslink the FcR [78].

### **Broadly Neutralizing Antibodies**

Despite targeting different Env elements, such as the CD4-binding site (CD4BS) (e.g., VRC01, 3BNC117), the gp120–gp41 interface (e.g., PGT151, 8ANC195), the gp41 membrane-proximal external region (MPER) (e.g., 10E8, 4E10), the variable loops V1/V2 (e.g., PG9, PG16) or V3 (e.g., PGT121, PGT126), most bNAbs preferentially recognize Env State 1 [46] (**Figure 1.2.3**). While several of these bNAbs were shown to mediate ADCC against cells infected with wildtype viruses (i.e., encoding functional Nef and Vpu proteins), including those recognizing the CD4-binding site (e.g., 3BNC117, NIH45-46), quaternary epitopes formed by the V1/V2 and V3

variable loops (e.g., PG9, PGT121-126) or the gp120–gp41 interface (e.g., PGT151), other bNAbs recognizing the gp41 MPER region (e.g., 10E8, 4E10, 2F5) failed to do so [84–89]. As described above, good recognition of Env at the surface of infected cells does not necessarily translate into potent ADCC responses: for example, 2G12 recognizes infected cells efficiently but fails to mediate potent ADCC [23,60,80,84,85], highlighting the importance of Fc engagement by effector cells. Accordingly, the ability of the CD4BS b12 Ab to protect rhesus macaques from SHIV challenge correlated with its capacity to engage FcR [26,90]. Similarly, a recent study described how the Fc portion of another CD4BS bNAb (3BNC117) was required to control HIV-1 replication in a humanized mouse model [91].

### Measuring ADCC

Several approaches have been developed to measure ADCC responses against HIV-1. These methods were recently described in detail elsewhere [11,92] and are summarized in **Table 1.2.1**. They commonly use T cells either pulsed with soluble HIV-1 Env recombinant proteins (gp120 or gp140), with AT-2-inactivated viruses or infected with different viral strains, as target cells. The selection of target cells must be done carefully because they define the type of Env epitopes that drive the ADCC response being measured. For instance, in target cells pulsed with soluble Env or inactivated viral particles, Env interacts with CD4 at the cell surface and, thus, samples the CD4-bound conformation [73,93,94]. This is not representative of productively HIV-1-infected cells, where the Env–CD4 interaction is prevented by the actions of Nef and Vpu [47,60,61,69]. As stated above, several bNAbs preferentially recognize quaternary epitopes in the unbound closed trimeric Env but not in monomeric gp120 [95–98] (**Figure 1.2.3**). Moreover, in pulsed T cells, CD4BS Abs compete with CD4 for the gp120 CD4BS [99–101] (**Figure 1.2.3**). By contrast, CD4i ADCC-mediating Abs, naturally present in HIV<sup>+</sup> sera, efficiently recognize both trimeric and monomeric CD4-bound Envs [60,61,80,93,102] (**Figure 1.2.3**). Therefore, ADCC assays using T cells coated with soluble Envs, pulsed with inactivated viruses or infected with strains defective for Nef and/or Vpu, preferentially measure ADCC responses mediated by CD4i Abs or HIV<sup>+</sup> sera, but underestimate the responses mediated by bNAbs, particularly those targeting the CD4BS.

While HIV-1-infected cells are protected from ADCC mediated by CD4i Abs and most HIV<sup>+</sup> sera [47,57,58,60,61,64,69,81–84], gp120 shed from productively infected cells binds CD4 on uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, sensitizing them to ADCC mediated by these Abs [83] (Figure 1.2.4), thus influencing *in vitro* ADCC measurements. Of note, shed gp120 binding to uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> was shown to be abrogated by CD4mc, which bind to the CD4-binding site required for the CD4 interaction [83]. Assays measuring ADCC in the total population cannot distinguish responses directed against infected cells versus uninfected bystander cells. For instance, GranToxiLux [7,23,80,103], RFADCC [73,94,104], and Chromium release [15,88,105] assays do not differentiate ADCC responses against infected versus uninfected bystander cells. Similarly, NK cell activation assays [13,106,107] cannot determine which cell population activates NK cells. Therefore, these methods overestimate ADCC responses mediated by Abs recognizing the CD4-bound conformation of Env. Enrichment of HIV-1-infected cells before ADCC measurements could improve the specificity of these assays [88].

Measurement of productively infected cell elimination by ADCC was reported using a T cell line expressing a Tat-driven luciferase gene. In this assay, Luciferase is only expressed upon productive HIV-1 infection and elimination of infected cells is calculated by the loss of luciferase activity [108]. Similarly, calculating the loss of the percentage of infected cells using GFP-expressing virus [47,58,60,61,64,83,86] or through intracellular detection of p24 [23,57,58,69,81–83,85] can also evaluate the elimination of productively infected cells. In agreement with the ability of HIV-1 to prevent exposure of CD4i Env epitopes [47,61], studies using these assays reported that productively infected cells are mainly resistant to ADCC mediated by anti-cluster A Abs or HIV<sup>+</sup> sera [47,57,58,60,61,64,69,81–84]. Another advantage of these assays is that they can measure the ADCC activity of bNAbs [60,81,84–87]. Since there is not a clear consensus on the best ADCC assay to use to measure anti-HIV ADCC responses [109], assay specificities should be carefully considered when interpreting results from different studies (see **Outstanding Questions**). These differences could explain, at least in part, the discrepancies concerning the ability or inability of anti-cluster A and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera to mediate ADCC responses against HIV-1-infected cells.

## New Strategies to Eliminate Infected Cells

In recent years, several approaches have been developed to eliminate HIV-1-infected cells through Ab attack. These approaches either allow Ab recognition of the closed Env or exposition of vulnerable ADCC-mediating CD4i Env epitopes. The Env trimer in its ‘closed’ state is known to be susceptible to bNabs. The need to achieve better neutralization breadth and potency led to the generation of bispecific Abs (bsAbs). Traditionally, bsAbs were engineered to target a combination of two Env epitopes, including the CD4BS, V3 glycans, V2 apex, gp120– gp41 interface or gp41 MPER (**Figure 1.2.5**) [[110–113](#)]. Alternatively, bsAbs were also developed to target an Env epitope on one arm and viral receptors on the other arm (**Figure 1.2.5**) [[114,115](#)]. Generally, bsAbs displayed superior neutralization profiles compared with their single parental bNabs. Furthermore, several groups generated bispecific proteins (bsp) with the capacity to target CD4BS and CoRBS [[116–121](#)]. Notably, the bsp eCD4-Ig, a fusion of CD4-Ig with a small CCR5-mimetic sulfopeptide (**Figure 1.2.5**), was shown to be broader and more potent than any bNabs, while providing protection against multiple SHIV challenges in macaque [[118](#)]. Importantly, bsAbs and bsp often contain an IgG Fc portion that not only improves their stability, solubility, and half-life, but also allows the recruitment and activation of FcR-bearing effector cells [[122](#)]. In that context, bsAbs and bsp showed potent ADCC activity against HIV-1-infected cells both *in vitro* and *in vivo* [[113,116,118](#)].

Another generation of bispecific Abs has been developed to target HIV-1 Env and simultaneously recruit cytotoxic T cells (**Figure 1.2.5**). These bsAbs, termed ‘bispecific T cell engagers’ (BiTEs) or ‘dual-affinity retargeting molecules’ (DARTs) comprise one arm targeting HIV-1 Env, while the other arm is directed to the CD3 receptor. These recombinant proteins were demonstrated to be capable of redirecting normal resting cytotoxic T cells to eliminate HIV-infected cells without prior *in vitro* sensitization [[123–125](#)]. Alternatively, Berger and colleagues recently reported the development of a new bispecific chimeric antigen receptor (CAR) targeting Env. Its expression on CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells allowed efficient elimination of HIV-1-infected CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells [[126](#)].

Increasing evidence suggests that Abs naturally elicited during HIV-1-infection preferentially recognize Env in its CD4-bound conformation [[47,127](#)]. Stemming from these observations, CD4mc were used to modulate the Env conformation at the surface of HIV-1-



infected cells, leading to the unmasking of CD4i epitopes [58]. This approach efficiently sensitized primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with HIV-1 primary isolates to ADCC. Strikingly, it also sensitized endogenously infected ex vivo-amplified primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells to ADCC mediated by autologous sera and effector cells. This suggests that all the elements required to eliminate HIV-1- infected cells by ADCC are already present in infected individuals. CD4mc bring the last piece to the puzzle, by opening Env and allowing Ab recognition and recruitment of effector cells. However, exposure of the epitopes recognized by these commonly elicited Abs requires the sequential opening of the Env trimer. This could be achieved with CD4mc, which initially open the Env trimer to allow binding of CoRBS Abs, but not of anti-cluster A Abs. CoRBS Abs binding then opens the trimer to expose anti-cluster A epitopes and sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC (**Figure 1.2.5B**) [57]. The fact that these two classes of CD4i nAb recognize highly conserved Env epitopes [60,61,128] suggests that this strategy represents a broad and potent approach to unlock the Env trimer and eliminate infected cells by ADCC. We note that these nAbs are easily elicited by immunization [129,130].

While these approaches represent promising tools for HIV-1 eradication, their ability to reduce the size of the HIV-1 reservoir in vivo remains to be proven. Notably, it is still unclear whether the level of Env present at the surface of reactivated latently infected cells is sufficient for the strategies described above (see **Outstanding Questions**). In this context, enhancing Env accumulation at the cell surface through BST-2 upregulation (via IFN type 1 or IL-27), shown to bolster ADCC responses [63,82], might complement these promising approaches.

### **Concluding Remarks**

To activate effector cells and mediate ADCC, Abs must first recognize their target, in this case Env. Since Env conformation greatly affects the recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by all the Abs directed against it, the dynamic conformational landscape of Env should be taken into account not only when measuring ADCC responses in vitro, but also when developing strategies aimed at bolstering this immune response.

#### 1.4.4 TRENDS

- bNAbs preferentially recognize Env in its ‘closed’ conformation, while non-neutralizing CD4-induced Abs target the ‘open’ CD4-bound conformation.
- Env tightly controls its transition from the unbound to the CD4-bound conformation to avoid recognition by host CD4-induced Abs.
- Nef and Vpu accessory proteins protect HIV-1-infected cells from ADCC by preventing Env–CD4 interactions and by reducing the expression levels of cell surface NKG2D ligands.
- Gp120 shed from infected cells binds CD4 on uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, sensitizing them to ADCC and influencing *in vitro* ADCC measurements.
- Targeting the Env ‘closed’ conformation with bispecific Abs and/or proteins or exposing vulnerable ADCC-mediating epitopes using CD4 mimetics are emerging approaches to eliminate HIV-1-infected cells.

#### 1.4.5 OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS

- Is there a threshold of Env recognition required for ADCC responses?
- What dictates differential ADCC activity of anti-Env Abs recognizing Env to similar extents?
- What is the best way to measure anti-Env ADCC responses *in vitro*?
- Is the level of Env present at the surface of reactivated latently infected cells sufficient for Ab attack?

## 1.4.6 GLOSSARY

### *Antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC)*

An adaptive host immune response that results in the lysis of target cells exposing cell surface antigens bound by specific Abs. Cross-linking of FcR expressed on effector cells, such as natural killer (NK) cells and monocytes, triggers the release of cytotoxic molecules, leading to cytolysis of the target cells.

### *Antibody Fc portion*

The tail region of an Ab that binds to FcR on effector cells and some components of the complement system. Ab isotypes (IgG, IgM, IgA, IgE, and IgD) dictate the immune response to be triggered. For example, ADCC is mainly driven by IgG1 and IgG3.

### *Broadly neutralizing antibodies (bNAbs)*

Abs with exceptional breadth and potency able to neutralize viral particles from a broad range of viral isolates.

### *CD4-induced antibodies (CD4i Abs)*

Abs recognizing an epitope that is occluded in the unliganded Env trimer. CD4 interaction is required for the exposure of their epitopes.

### *Small CD4 mimetic compounds (CD4mc)*

Small compounds of low molecular weight that interact within the gp120 Phe 43 cavity and induce conformational changes similar to those induced by CD4.

### *Fc receptor (FcR)*

Protein present at the surface of certain immune effector cells (e.g., NK cell, macrophages, monocytes, and neutrophils) that can interact with the Fc portion of Abs.

### *Non-neutralizing antibodies (nnAbs)*

Abs unable to neutralize viral particles from HIV-1 isolates, mainly because their epitopes are not exposed in the unliganded Env trimer present at the surface of virions.

#### *RV144 vaccine trial*

HIV-1 vaccine trial performed in Thailand using the ALVAC canarypox vector encoding some HIV-1 genes (*gag*, *pol*, and *env*) and followed by a bivalent AIDSVAX B/E gp120 boost. It is the only human vaccine trial to date that has provided some degree of protection against HIV-1 transmission (31.2%).

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#### **1.4.8 RESOURCES**

<sup>i</sup>[www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/20170720\\_Data\\_book\\_2017\\_en.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/20170720_Data_book_2017_en.pdf)

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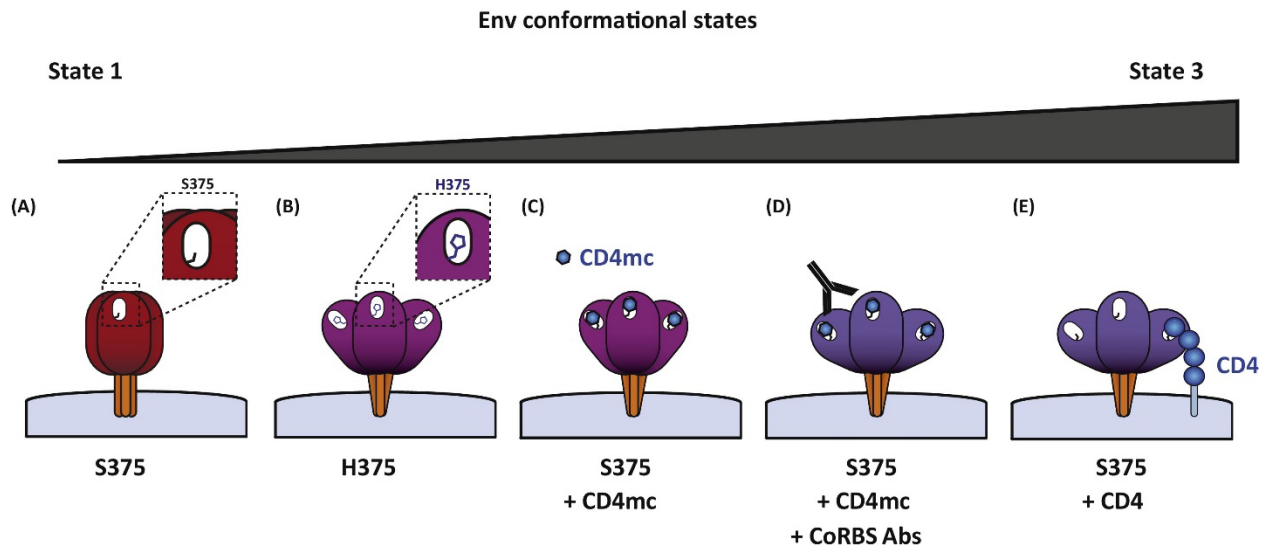
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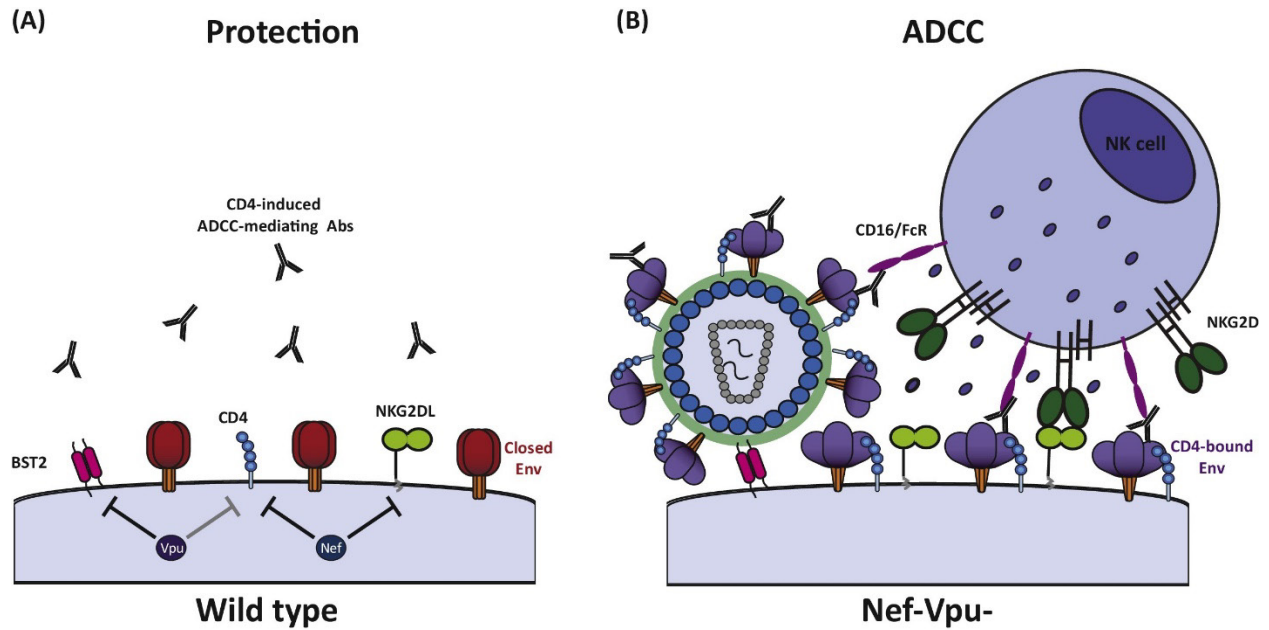
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## 1.4.10 FIGURES



### Figure 1.2.1 - HIV-1 Envelope Glycoproteins (Env) Conformational Landscape.

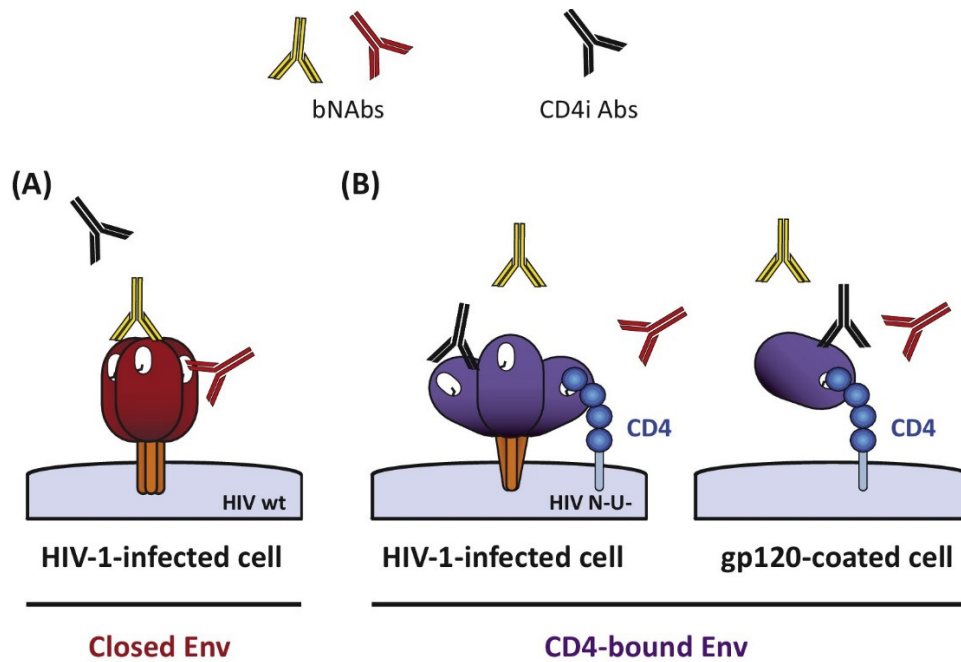
The Phe43 cavity (in white) modulates Env conformation. A small residue at position 375, such as serine (S375), favors a ‘closed’ (State 1) conformation (A). Larger hydrophobic residues at this position, such as histidine (H375), can trigger Env to sample more ‘open’ conformations (B), closer to the CD4-bound state (State 3) induced by interaction with membrane-anchored CD4 (E). CD4 mimetics (CD4mc) trigger conformational changes that initially ‘open’ the Env trimer and stabilize Env in State 2/3 conformations (C). Antibodies against the co-receptor binding site (CoRBS) prompt the Env trimer to reach conformations closer to State 3 in the presence of CD4mc (D).



**Figure 1.2.2 - Nef and Vpu Accessory Proteins Protect Infected Cells from Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity (ADCC) Responses.**

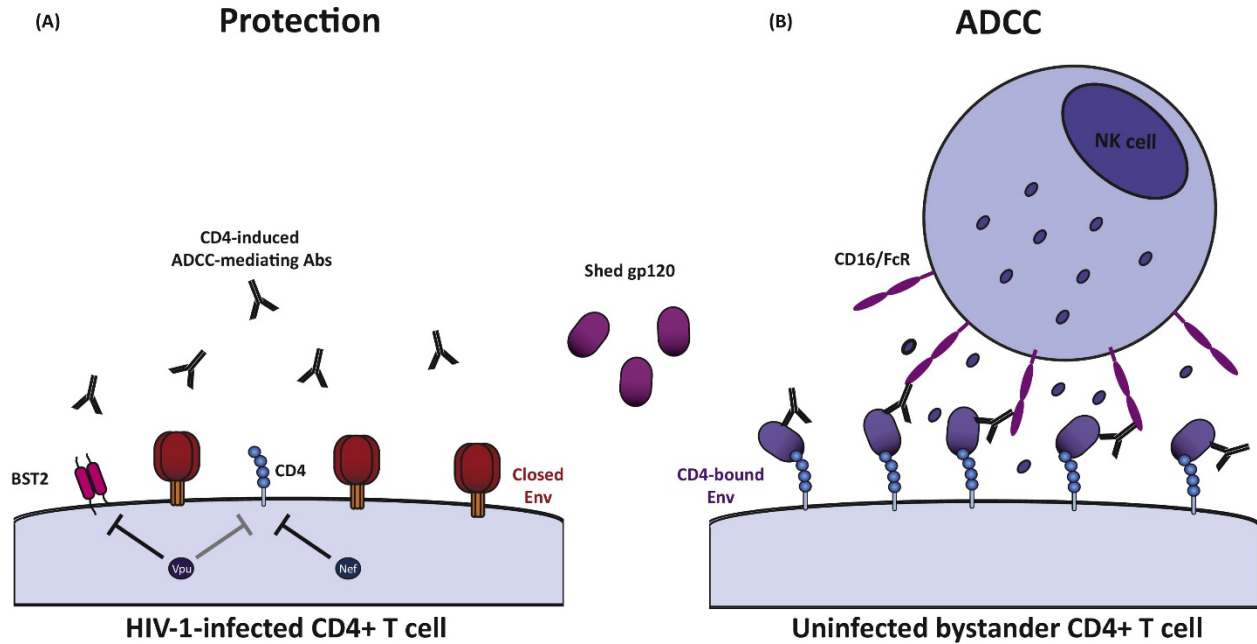
To prevent the exposure of vulnerable CD4-induced ADCC-mediating epitopes, the virus controls the level of cell surface CD4 through the action of Nef and Vpu and limits HIV-1 envelope glycoprotein (Env) accumulation through Vpu-mediated BST-2 downmodulation (A). Without the action of these accessory proteins, Env and CD4 can interact at the cell surface, thus sensitizing infected cells to ADCC mediated by CD4-induced (CD4i) antibodies (B). Nef also limits NKG2D ligands (NKG2DL) expression at the surface of infected cells (A), preventing the interaction with the NKG2D receptor present on effector cells, which acts as a co-receptor for ADCC mediated by CD16/ FcR (B).





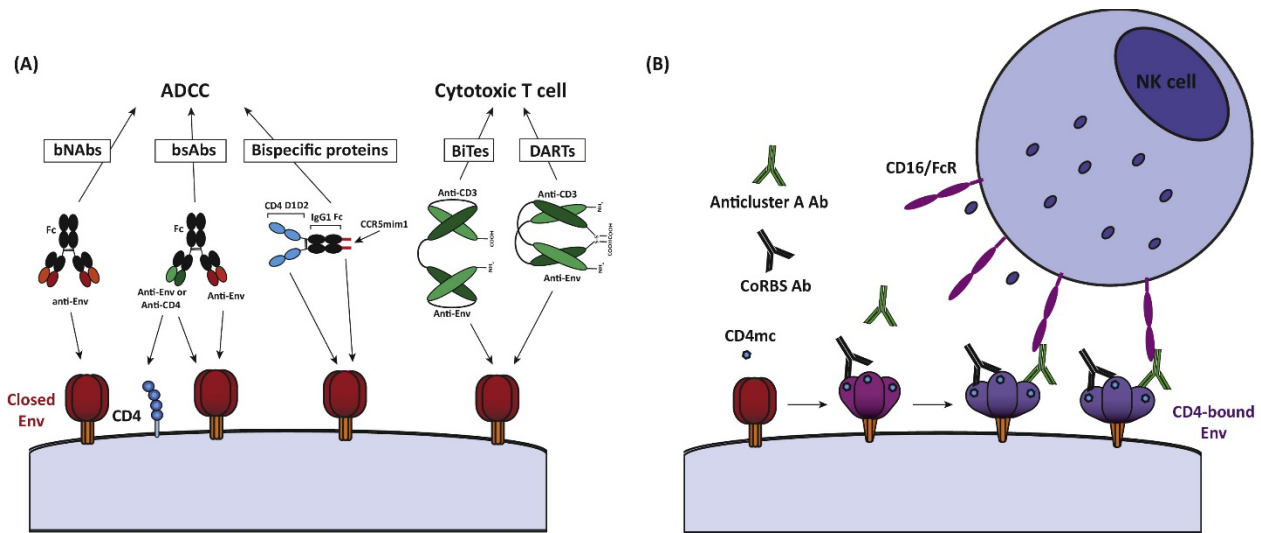
**Figure 1.2.3 - Different Modes of HIV-1 Envelope Glycoprotein (Env) Recognition at the Surface of HIV-1-Infected or gp120-Coated Cells.**

(A) Broadly neutralizing antibodies (bNAbs) preferentially bind to the ‘closed’ State 1 trimer. (B) By contrast, CD4i Abs bind to Env sampling the ‘open’ CD4-bound conformation. This conformation is achieved upon Env–CD4 interaction at the surface of cells infected with viruses defective for Nef and Vpu (N<sup>-</sup>U<sup>-</sup>) or in gp120-coated cells.



**Figure 1.2.4 - Interaction of Shed gp120 with CD4 Sensitizes Uninfected Bystander Cells to Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity (ADCC) Responses.**

While infected cells are mainly protected from ADCC mediated by CD4-induced (CD4i) antibodies (Abs) due to the actions of Nef and Vpu (A), uninfected bystander cells become susceptible to ADCC upon soluble gp120 interaction with CD4 (B). Due to its noncovalent association with gp41, gp120 sheds from the surface of productively infected cells. Upon interaction with the CD4 receptor present at the surface of uninfected bystander cells, gp120 samples the CD4-bound conformation, resulting in the exposure of vulnerable CD4i epitopes and leading to the sensitization of these cells to ADCC responses.



**Figure 1.2.5 - Emerging Approaches to Eliminate HIV-1-Infected Cells through Antibody (Ab) Attack.**

(A) Broadly neutralizing Abs (bNAbs), bispecific Abs (bsAbs), or bispecific proteins preferentially recognize the HIV-1 envelope glycoprotein (Env) ‘closed’ conformation by targeting one or two different Env epitopes. Alternatively, bsAbs can also include one arm directed against viral receptors (CD4 or CCR5). These constructs contain an IgG Fc domain that allows the recruitment and activation of FcR-bearing effector cells. Similarly, bispecific T cell engagers (BiTEs) or dual-affinity retargeting molecules (DARTs) comprise one arm targeting Env, while the other arm allows the recruitment and activation of cytotoxic T cells by targeting CD3. (B) CD4 mimetics (CD4mc) sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) mediated by sera from patients with HIV-1. CD4mc initially open the trimeric Env to allow the binding of co-receptor binding site (CoRBS) Abs, which expose cluster A epitopes. Anticlustera A Abs recruit effector cells and mediate ADCC.

**Table 1.2.1 - Description of ADCC assays.**

Assay	Target cells	Description	Readout	Measured Population	ADCC responses with anti-Cluster A Abs or HIV+ sera	References
Chromium release assay	Pulsed with soluble Env or HIV-1-infected cells	Targets cells are labeled with the radioactive <sup>51</sup> Chromium. ADCC-mediated target cell killing measured by the release of the radioactive isotope into the cell culture supernatant	Target cell elimination	Total population	+	[15, 88, 105]
NK cell activation assay	Pulsed with soluble Env or HIV-1-infected cells	Ab-dependent activation of NK cell functions assessed by detection of intracellular IFN- $\gamma$ , cell-surface expression of CD107a or by measuring the loss of intracellular granzyme B	Activation of NK cell functions	Total population	+	[13, 106, 107]
ADCC GranToxiLux assay	Pulsed with soluble Env or HIV-1-infected cells	Target cells incubated with a cell-permeable fluorogenic peptide substrate that generates fluorescent signal when hydrolyzed by granzyme B. Level of target cells that receive granzyme B from effector cells is determined by flow cytometry	Delivery of granzyme B into target cell	Total population	+	[7, 23, 80, 103]
Rapid and Fluorometric ADCC (RFADCC) assay	Pulsed with soluble Env or inactivated virus or HIV-1-infected cells	Target cells stained with membrane dye (PKH-26) and a viability dye (CFSE). ADCC-mediated target cell killing is calculated by the emergence of a cell population positively labeled by membrane dye that loses the viability dye (PKH-26+ CFSE-)	Target cell permeabilization	Total population	+	[73, 94, 104]
Luciferase assay	HIV-1-infected cells	Target cell expressing luciferase from Tat-inducible promoter upon HIV-1 infection. ADCC-mediated target cell killing is measured by the dose-dependent loss of luciferase activity	HIV-1-infected cell elimination	Infected cell population	-	[63, 84, 108]
Infected-cell elimination assay	HIV-1-infected cells	Measurement of HIV-1-infected cell elimination by ADCC assessed by calculating the loss of the percentage of infected cells using GFP-expressing viruses or detection of intracellular p24	HIV-1-infected cell elimination	Infected cell population	-	[47, 57, 58, 60, 61, 64, 69, 81, 82, 85]

## **CHAPITRE II - HYPOTHÈSES ET OBJECTIFS**

Les études structurales et biophysiques ont clairement démontré que le trimère d'Env des isolats primaires du VIH-1 adoptent préférentiellement la conformation « fermée » et que les épitopes des nnAbs y sont inaccessibles à moins qu'Env interagisse avec son récepteur CD4 ([185](#), [186](#), [190](#), [216-218](#), [220](#), [221](#), [1217](#), [1218](#), [1425](#)). Or, le rôle des nnAbs dans l'élimination des cellules infectées par le VIH-1 reste un sujet controversé. En effet, de nombreuses études *in vitro* tendent à démontrer que les nnAbs, et plus particulièrement ceux reconnaissant le domaine interne de la gp120, sont de puissants effecteurs de la réponse ADCC ([1228](#), [1229](#), [1235](#), [1360](#), [1426-1433](#)), tandis que d'autres ont prouvé que les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 évadent substantiellement la pression immunitaire par les nnAbs, notamment grâce à la régulation négative de CD4 et BST-2 par les protéines accessoires Nef et Vpu ([756-758](#), [1099-1101](#), [1241](#), [1434-1436](#)). De plus, cette discordance s'applique également aux études *in vivo*. Bien que la majorité des études dans des modèles animaux ont noté que les nnAbs jouent un rôle négligeable dans la prévention de l'infection et le contrôle de la charge virale ([1234](#), [1244-1248](#), [1323](#), [1437](#)), deux études phares ont mis en lumière leur potentiel antiviral dans un contexte prophylactique ou thérapeutique ([1242](#), [1359](#)). Afin de réconcilier ces résultats divergents, l'objectif principal de cette thèse de doctorat est d'apporter une compréhension approfondie des facteurs gouvernant la conformation d'Env et la capacité des nnAbs à médier la réponse ADCC afin de pouvoir exploiter leurs activités effectrices contre le VIH-1. Cet objectif s'articule autour de quatre thèmes généraux qui seront abordés dans les chapitres qui suivent :

### 1. Comment quantifier la réponse ADCC *in vitro*?

Une variété de méthodes *in vitro* est utilisée pour quantifier la réponse ADCC contre les cellules infectées par le VIH-1. L'utilisation de certaines de ces techniques favorisent la détection d'une forte réponse ADCC par les nnAbs, tandis que d'autres montrent que les cellules infectées sont résistantes à ces anticorps. En fait, ces techniques diffèrent notamment par la nature des cellules cibles et des constructions virales utilisées, mais surtout dans la manière de mesurer l'ADCC puisque certaines méthodes ne prennent pas en compte la conformation d'Env présentée par les cellules cibles. Dans le **chapitre III**, nous nous concentrons sur une analyse comparative détaillée des méthodes de quantification de la réponse ADCC les plus utilisées dans la littérature et nous suggérons des modifications expérimentales afin d'éviter les biais inhérents à certaines techniques.

2. *Quelles propriétés structurales d'Env affectent sa conformation et la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs?*

En absence de Nef et Vpu, l'interaction entre Env et CD4 à la surface des cellules infectées induit des changements conformationnels permettant l'exposition des épitopes reconnus par les nnAbs, ce qui les rend hautement susceptibles à la réponse ADCC. Chez un virus de type sauvage, l'Env non-liée adopte préférentiellement sa conformation « fermée », mais l'introduction de mutations dans certains de ses domaines structuraux conservés peut forcer l'adoption spontanée de sa conformation « ouverte ». Dans le **chapitre IV**, l'objectif est de caractériser les déterminants structuraux d'Env affectant sa reconnaissance par les nnAbs et d'identifier des polymorphismes naturels pouvant rendre certaines souches plus susceptibles à la réponse ADCC.

3. *Quelles fonctions de Vpu contribuent à protéger les cellules infectées de la réponse ADCC?*

La protéine accessoire Vpu cible de manière simultanée un large éventail de protéines transmembranaires afin d'évader les réponses immunitaires innées et adaptatives. La régulation négative de la plupart d'entre elles dépend uniquement d'une interaction avec le domaine transmembranaire de Vpu. Le **chapitre V** a pour but d'étudier la dynamique de la polyfonctionnalité de Vpu et de l'importance de la somme de ces fonctions pour protéger les cellules infectées de la réponse ADCC et promouvoir la réplication du VIH-1 *in vivo* en présence de nnAbs.

4. *Comment cibler les cellules infectées avec des nnAbs en utilisant de nouvelles approches expérimentales?*

À l'instar de CD4, les CD4mc s'insèrent dans la cavité Phe43 de la gp120 et déclenchent l'ouverture du trimère d'Env, rendant les cellules infectées susceptibles à la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs. Les récentes études pré-cliniques ont montré des résultats prometteurs, mais une compréhension plus approfondie des potentiels mécanismes de résistance du VIH-1 à ces molécules est nécessaire. Dans le **chapitre VI**, nous caractérisons des résidus polymorphiques d'Env modulant son interaction avec les CD4mc et nous élaborons de nouvelles stratégies pour augmenter leur capacité antivirale en combinaison avec les nnAbs.

## Articles présentés dans les chapitres suivants

### CHAPITRE III - MÉTHODES DE QUANTIFICATION DE LA RÉPONSE ADCC

Article 2: *Uninfected Bystander Cells Impact the Measurement of HIV-Specific Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity Responses*

Article 3: *Incomplete Downregulation of CD4 Expression Affects HIV-1 Env Conformation and Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity Responses*

Article 4: *Detection of the HIV-1 accessory proteins Nef and Vpu by flow cytometry represents a new tool to study their functional interplay within a single infected CD4+ T cell*

### CHAPITRE IV - RÔLE DE LA CONFORMATION D'ENV DANS LA RÉPONSE ADCC

Article 5: *Envelope glycoproteins sampling states 2/3 are susceptible to ADCC by sera from HIV-1-infected individuals*

Article 6: *HIV-1 envelope glycoproteins proteolytic cleavage protects infected cells from ADCC mediated by plasma from infected individuals*

Article 7: *Influence of the Envelope gp120 Phe43 Cavity on HIV-1 Sensitivity to Antibody-Dependent Cell-Mediated Cytotoxicity Responses*

### CHAPITRE V - RÔLE DE LA PROTÉINE ACCESSOIRE VPU DANS LA RÉPONSE ADCC

Article 8: *Upregulation of BST-2 by Type I Interferons Reduces the Capacity of Vpu to Protect HIV-1-Infected Cells from NK Cell Responses*

Article 9: *HIV-1 Vpu restricts Fc-mediated effector functions in vivo*

### CHAPITRE VI - UTILISATION DES MIMÉTIQUES MOLÉCULAIRES DE CD4 POUR OUVRIR ENV

Article 10: *The HIV-1 Env gp120 Inner Domain Shapes the Phe43 Cavity and the CD4 Binding Site*

Article 11: *BST-2 Expression Modulates Small CD4-Mimetic Sensitization of HIV-1-Infected Cells to Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity*



# **CHAPITRE III - MÉTHODES DE QUANTIFICATION DE LA RÉPONSE ADCC**

### 3.1 Préambule

Dans ce chapitre, nous décortiquons les différentes méthodes de quantification de la réponse ADCC dirigée contre les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 utilisées en laboratoire et afin d'identifier les plus rigoureuses ayant une pertinence biologique. Afin de remplir ces critères, ces techniques doivent être capables de mesurer spécifiquement l'élimination des cellules productivement infectées par des virus pleinement infectieux. Lors de notre analyse comparative, nous avons identifié plusieurs biais importants dans certaines techniques largement utilisées, y compris celles utilisées pour évaluer les corrélats de la protection vaccinale, menant à une surestimation de la capacité antivirale des nnAbs présents dans le sérum d'individus infectés par le VIH-1 (sérum VIH+). Nous avons développé des protocoles améliorés pour quantifier la réponse ADCC dans des conditions biologiquement pertinentes. Dans l'**article 2**, nous avons noté que certaines méthodes d'ADCC ne discernent pas l'élimination des cellules infectées par rapport aux cellules non-infectées. Ainsi, ces tests détectent une forte réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs, qui est principalement dirigée contre les cellules non-infectées recouvertes de gp120 soluble liée au CD4 présent à leur surface. Nous avons caractérisé en détail les populations cellulaires reconnues par les nnAbs et 99% d'entre elles se sont avérées non-infectées. Afin de résoudre ce problème, nous avons adapté ces techniques afin d'y inclure une étape préalable d'enrichissement rapide des cellules productivement infectées. Dans l'**article 3**, nous avons découvert que certains clones moléculaires infectieux (IMC) du VIH-1 comportant un gène rapporteur pour faciliter l'analyse à haut débit présentent une suppression incomplète des niveaux de CD4 à la surface des cellules infectées en raison d'une perte d'expression de Nef. Ceci entraîne une augmentation de la sensibilité des cellules infectées à l'ADCC médiée par les nnAbs. L'insertion du gène rapporteur dans le provirus doit se faire en combinaison avec des stratégies moléculaires permettant de maintenir l'expression de Nef. Nous montrons que l'insertion d'un site interne de liaison des ribosomes (IRES) en aval du gène rapporteur est capable de restaurer l'expression de Nef, ce qui se traduit par une résistance des cellules infectées à l'ADCC médiée par les nnAbs. Dans l'**article 4**, nous avons élaboré un nouveau marquage intracellulaire capable de détecter Nef et Vpu dans leur forme native par cytométrie en flux, ce qui nous a permis de confirmer que la régulation négative de CD4 par ces deux protéines représente le facteur principal dictant la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à l'ADCC médiée par les sérums VIH+. Ce nouvel outil peut également servir à surveiller l'expression adéquate de Nef et Vpu dans les constructions virales.

## **ARTICLE 2**

**Les cellules non-infectées affectent la quantification de la réponse ADCC  
contre les cellules infectées par le VIH-1**

***Uninfected Bystander Cells Impact the Measurement of HIV-Specific Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity Responses***

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### 3.2.1 RÉSUMÉ

La conformation des glycoprotéines d'enveloppe (Env) du VIH-1 a un impact considérable sur la reconnaissance des anticorps et la réponse cytotoxique cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCC). En l'absence du récepteur CD4 à la surface cellulaire, l'Env des virus primaires adopte une conformation « fermée » qui dissimule les épitopes induits par CD4 (CD4i). Le virus contrôle l'expression de CD4 par l'action des protéines accessoires Nef et Vpu, protégeant ainsi les cellules infectées de la réponse ADCC. Cependant, la gp120 excrétée par les cellules infectées peut se lier au CD4 présent sur les cellules non-infectées, les sensibilisant ainsi à l'ADCC médiée par les anticorps CD4i. Nous avons donc émis l'hypothèse que ces cellules non-infectées avoisinantes pourraient avoir un impact sur l'interprétation des mesures d'ADCC. Pour étudier cette hypothèse, nous avons évalué la capacité des anticorps contre les épitopes CD4i (nnAbs) et des anticorps neutralisants à large spectre (bNAbs) à médier l'ADCC mesuré par cinq techniques d'ADCC couramment utilisées dans le domaine. Nos résultats indiquent que les cellules non-infectées recouvertes de gp120 sont reconnues efficacement par les nnAbs, mais pas par les bNAbs. Par conséquent, les cellules non-infectées affectent considérablement les mesures d'ADCC *in vitro* effectuées avec des techniques qui ne permettent pas de différencier la réponse ADCC dirigée contre les cellules infectées par rapport aux cellules non-infectées. De plus, en utilisant une technique de cytométrie en flux pouvant détecter l'ARNm du virus, permettant ainsi de détecter les cellules infectées de manière productive, nous avons constaté que la grande majorité des cellules infectées par le VIH-1 provenant de cultures *in vitro* ou d'échantillons *ex vivo* provenant de personnes infectées par le VIH-1 sont CD4 négatives et n'exposent donc pas des niveaux significatifs d'épitopes CD4i. Dans l'ensemble, nos résultats indiquent que les techniques d'ADCC incapables de différencier les réponses contre les cellules infectées et non-infectées surestiment les réponses médiées par les anticorps CD4i.

### 3.2.2 ABSTRACT

The conformation of the HIV-1 envelope glycoprotein (Env) substantially impacts antibody recognition and antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) responses. In the absence of the CD4 receptor at the cell surface, primary Envs sample a “closed” conformation that occludes CD4-induced (CD4i) epitopes. The virus controls CD4 expression through the actions of Nef and Vpu accessory proteins, thus protecting infected cells from ADCC responses. However,

gp120 shed from infected cells can bind to CD4 present on uninfected bystander cells, sensitizing them to ADCC mediated by CD4i antibodies (Abs). Therefore, we hypothesized that these bystander cells could impact the interpretation of ADCC measurements. To investigate this, we evaluated the ability of antibodies to CD4i epitopes and broadly neutralizing Abs (bNAbs) to mediate ADCC measured by five ADCC assays commonly used in the field. Our results indicate that the uninfected bystander cells coated with gp120 are efficiently recognized by the CD4i ligands but not the bNAbs. Consequently, the uninfected bystander cells substantially affect in vitro measurements made with ADCC assays that fail to identify responses against infected versus uninfected cells. Moreover, using an mRNA flow technique that detects productively infected cells, we found that the vast majority of HIV-1-infected cells in in vitro cultures or ex vivo samples from HIV-1-infected individuals are CD4 negative and therefore do not expose significant levels of CD4i epitopes. Altogether, our results indicate that ADCC assays unable to differentiate responses against infected versus uninfected cells overestimate responses mediated by CD4i ligands.

### **3.2.3 IMPORTANCE**

Emerging evidence supports a role for antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) in protection against HIV-1 transmission and disease progression. However, there are conflicting reports regarding the ability of non-neutralizing antibodies targeting CD4-inducible (CD4i) Env epitopes to mediate ADCC. Here, we performed a side-by-side comparison of different methods currently being used in the field to measure ADCC responses to HIV-1. We found that assays which are unable to differentiate virus-infected from uninfected cells greatly overestimate ADCC responses mediated by antibodies to CD4i epitopes and underestimate responses mediated by broadly neutralizing antibodies (bNAbs). Our results strongly argue for the use of assays that measure ADCC against HIV-1-infected cells expressing physiologically relevant conformations of Env to evaluate correlates of protection in vaccine trials.

### 3.2.4 INTRODUCTION

Antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) represents a major effector mechanism used by the immune system to target and eliminate virally infected cells. Besides being incorporated into viral particles, the HIV-1 envelope glycoprotein (Env) trimer represents the only virus-specific target exposed on the surface of infected cells and thus represents a major target for ADCC (1). Emerging evidence suggests that Env conformation plays a critical role in the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC (2, 3). HIV-1 Env is a metastable molecule, which is driven by CD4 receptor engagement to transition from its unliganded “closed” high-energy conformation (state 1) into an intermediate “partially open” conformation (state 2) and then into a more open CD4-bound conformation (state 3) (4). Interaction of Env with the CD4 receptor was reported to be critical for the exposure of epitopes for ADCC-mediating antibodies (Abs) (5–7). Accordingly, ADCC-mediating Abs naturally present in sera from HIV-1- infected individuals (HIV<sup>+</sup> sera) preferentially target HIV-1-infected cells that present Env in states 2 and 3 (5, 8). In line with this observation, ADCC activity present in sera from HIV-1-infected individuals (HIV<sup>+</sup> sera) is predominantly mediated by the anti-cluster A Abs (5, 9–11, 14). These non-neutralizing antibodies (nnAbs) target a highly conserved region in the gp120 inner domain that is buried inside the closed unliganded Env and becomes exposed only upon CD4 engagement (6, 7, 10–14). Thus, cells infected with primary viruses that expose Env in its closed unliganded conformation are largely resistant to ADCC induced by these nnAbs (7, 10, 15–19).

To protect HIV-1-infected cells from ADCC by naturally occurring CD4-induced (CD4i) Abs, the virus has evolved several strategies to limit the adoption of the CD4-bound conformation and thus prevent exposure of vulnerable CD4i epitopes. HIV-1 limits Env-CD4 interaction by both downregulating CD4 and preventing Env accumulation at the surface of infected cells (5, 7, 20–22). Two accessory proteins, Nef and Vpu, reduce cell surface expression of CD4 (5, 7), while Env accumulation is tightly controlled through efficient internalization (22) and Vpu-mediated BST-2 downregulation (20, 21, 23). Therefore, Nef and Vpu play a central role in protecting HIV-1-infected cells from ADCC by averting the premature exposure of vulnerable epitopes.

While HIV-1-infected cells are generally protected from ADCC, we recently found that uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells are susceptible to ADCC mediated by CD4i ligands (16). It has

been well established that due to its noncovalent association with gp41, gp120 sheds from the surface of productively infected cells (13, 24, 25). Binding of shed gp120 to the CD4 receptor on the surface of uninfected bystander cells exposes vulnerable CD4i ADCC epitopes and results in the sensitization of these cells to ADCC (16). However, the extent to which exposure of these CD4i epitopes on uninfected bystander cells impacts *in vitro* measurements of ADCC has not yet been determined. Many ADCC assays measure killing of total cell population and thus are unable to differentiate ADCC responses against HIV-infected cells from those against uninfected bystander cells. Here, we compared different ADCC assays currently used in the field for their ability to measure HIV-1-infected cell-specific responses. We found that uninfected bystander cells greatly impact *in vitro* measurements of ADCC by introducing a significant bias toward CD4i Abs.

### 3.2.5 RESULTS

#### **Differential recognition of uninfected bystander cells and infected cells by ADCC-mediating Abs.**

We first explored the capacity of different ADCC-mediating Abs to recognize uninfected bystander cells versus productively infected cells. To this end, we infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from HIV-1-uninfected individuals with a previously reported wild-type (WT) HIV-1 strain that encodes all accessory proteins as well as a *gfp* reporter gene and the R5-tropic (ADA) envelope (NL4.3 ADA green fluorescent protein [GFP]) (7, 16). In this system, productively infected cells are GFP<sup>+</sup>, whereas GFP<sup>-</sup> cells represent the uninfected bystander cells. Forty-eight hours post-infection, the average percentage of infected cells was 12.6%. At this step, cells were incubated with HIV<sup>+</sup> sera, the nnAb A32, or a broadly neutralizing Ab (bNAb) (either PGT126 or 3BNC117). The cluster A-specific monoclonal antibody (mAb) A32 recognizes a highly conserved CD4i epitope located at the interface of the gp120 inner domain layers 1 and 2 (7, 11–13). As previously reported, productively infected (GFP<sup>+</sup>) cells were poorly recognized by A32 as well as HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (16), while mock-infected cells were not recognized (Fig. 3.1.1A to C). This weak recognition of infected cells is likely due to the efficient downregulation of CD4 by Nef and Vpu (see Fig. 3.1.S1 in the supplemental material), which permits Env to retain its “closed” conformation. In contrast, uninfected bystander (GFP<sup>-</sup>) cells from the same culture were readily recognized by A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup>



sera (**Fig. 3.1.1A and B**). As most cells present in the culture are gp120-coated uninfected bystander cells ([16](#)), strong binding was detected for A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera when Ab binding was measured for the total cell population (i.e., both uninfected and infected cells) (**Fig. 3.1.1B**). Of note, sera from HIV-1-uninfected individuals (HIV<sup>-</sup> sera) did not react with any cell population (**Fig. 3.1.1C**).

In contrast to nnAbs, bNAbs preferentially recognize Env in its closed conformation ([4](#)). PGT126 binds a conserved region at the V3 loop stem near the N332 glycosylation site ([26–28](#)), while 3BNC117 recognizes the CD4-binding site ([29](#)). Both bNAbs were previously found to mediate ADCC against HIV-1-infected cells ([18, 21, 30–32](#)). Consistent with these findings, PGT126 and 3BNC117 efficiently recognized productively infected cells (GFP<sup>+</sup>) but not the uninfected GFP<sup>-</sup> cells (**Fig. 3.1.1A and B**). As expected, since the majority of the cells in the culture are not recognized by these Abs, the overall (total) signal obtained with these Abs was lower than the signal obtained with A32 or HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 3.1.1B**). In agreement with the role of Nef and Vpu in preventing the formation of CD4i epitopes through CD4 downregulation (**Fig. 3.1.S1**), deletion of these accessory genes dramatically increased recognition of infected (GFP<sup>+</sup>) cells by A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 3.1.1C**). To rule out the possibility that these phenotypes were related to the viral strain used, we also used primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with the transmitted founder (TF) virus CH77 and obtained similar recognition patterns (**Fig. 3.1.S2**). Altogether, these results indicate that CD4i ligands recognize uninfected bystander cells coated with shed gp120 more efficiently than Abs preferentially recognizing the closed trimer.

### **Assays measuring ADCC against productively infected cells reveal greater killing of infected cells by bNAbs than by CD4i Abs.**

To evaluate the potential impact of the uninfected bystander cell population on ADCC, we compared different assays currently used in the field to detect ADCC responses against WT-infected cells using the A32, PGT126, or 3BNC117 MAb or human sera. We initially tested assays designed to distinguish ADCC responses against infected cells from those against uninfected bystander cells. These included the fluorescence-activated cell sorting (FACS)-based infected-cell elimination (ICE) assay, in which ADCC-mediated elimination of productively infected cells is determined by calculating the loss of infected cells using a GFP-expressing virus ([5, 7, 10, 16](#)) or

by measuring intracellular HIV-1 p24 antigen (10, 15, 17, 32). Using primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with the NL4.3 ADA GFP WT virus as target cells and autologous peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) as effector cells, we found that WT-infected cells were significantly more susceptible to ADCC mediated by PGT126 and 3BNC117 than to that mediated by A32 (Fig. 3.1.2A). Furthermore, WT-infected cells were largely resistant to ADCC responses mediated by A32 (Fig. 3.1.2B, gray bars) and responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera were comparable to those seen with HIV<sup>-</sup> sera (Fig. 3.1.2C, gray circles). Again, deletion of *nef* and *vpu* genes drastically increased ADCC responses mediated by A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (Fig. 3.1.2B and C, black bars and circles, respectively), confirming the dependence of this killing on Env-CD4 interaction.

Measurement of ADCC-mediated elimination of infected cells was also conducted using a luciferase assay (33). In this assay, infected CEM.NKr-CCR5-sLTR-Luc cells expressing a Tat-driven luciferase reporter gene serve as target cells, while human PBMCs or a CD16<sup>+</sup> NK cell line is used as effector cells (18, 21, 22, 33). As luciferase is expressed only upon productive HIV-1 infection, elimination of infected cells can be calculated by the loss of luciferase activity. Since this assay measures the elimination of productively infected (Tat-expressing) cells, we observed ADCC responses very similar to those obtained with the FACS-based ICE assay (compare Fig. 3.1.2A to C with D to F; Fig. 3.1.S3). ADCC responses mediated by PGT126 and 3BNC117 were significantly higher than those obtained with A32. HIV<sup>+</sup> sera and A32 mediated robust ADCC responses only against cells infected with the *nef*-*vpu*- virus (Fig. 3.1.2E and F). Similar results were obtained using target cells infected with the transmitted founder CH77 virus (Fig. 3.1.S4). These results confirm the increased ability of bNAbs to mediate ADCC responses against infected cells compared to CD4i Abs.

### **Assays measuring ADCC activities on the total cell population overestimate the responses mediated by CD4i Abs.**

The two assays described above are able to distinguish between HIV-1-infected and uninfected bystander cells. Other ADCC methods, however, assess killing on the total cell population (i.e., uninfected and infected cells). Given that the binding of shed gp120 on uninfected bystander cells enables recognition of these cells by CD4i Abs but not bNAbs, we hypothesized that these assays would primarily detect killing of bystander cells.

To investigate this, we performed a similar series of experiments as in **Fig. 3.1.2** but measured ADCC using assays that detect killing within the total cell population: the granzyme B assay and the NK cell activation assay. The granzyme B assay (GranToxiLux or Pantoxilux assay) detects granzyme B activity in target cells upon incubation with NK cells and Abs or sera ([34–36](#)). Since this assay is not compatible with the permeabilization step required to perform intracellular p24 staining, the user cannot differentiate productively infected cells from uninfected bystander cells. Similarly, the NK cell activation assay, which measures NK activation markers (CD107a and interferon gamma [IFN- $\gamma$ ]), is unable to determine which cell population (infected or uninfected) leads to NK cell activation ([20](#), [37–40](#)). The ADCC responses detected with the granzyme B and NK cell activation assays were strikingly different from those measured with the FACS-based ICE and luciferase assays (compare **Fig. 3.1.2 to 3.1.3A to F**). Strong responses were detected against WT-infected targets using A32, while weak responses were observed with PGT126 and 3BNC117 (**Fig. 3.1.3A and D**). Similarly, robust granzyme B activity and NK cell activation were detected with HIV<sup>+</sup> sera in the context of WT-infected target cells but not with HIV<sup>-</sup> sera (**Fig. 3.1.3C and F**), while both assays were unable to detect the protective effect of Nef and Vpu accessory proteins on ADCC responses (**Fig. 3.1.3B, C, E, and F and 3.1.S5**). Results obtained with granzyme B and NK activation were similar to those obtained with the FACS-based ICE assay when responses were calculated for the total population (GFP<sup>-</sup> and GFP<sup>+</sup>) rather than by gating on productively infected (GFP<sup>+</sup>) cells (**Fig. 3.1.3G to I**). Moreover, while assays measuring the elimination of productively infected cells (FACS-based and luciferase assays) showed a positive correlation between antibody binding and ADCC (**Fig. 3.1.4A and B**), no such correlation was observed with assays that measured killing of total targets (granzyme B, NK activation, or FACS-based ICE on total cell population) (**Fig. 3.1.4C to E**). Thus, assays relying on the assessment of ADCC responses on the total cell population overestimate ADCC responses mediated by CD4i Abs and at the same time underestimate responses mediated by bNAbs.

**Most ADCC activity detected using total cell target population is directed against uninfected bystander cells.**

Since A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera preferentially recognize uninfected bystander cells (**Fig. 3.1.1**), we hypothesized that most of the ADCC responses detected with the granzyme B and NK activation assays were directed against such cells. To test this possibility, uninfected bystander cells (GFP<sup>-</sup> CD4<sup>+</sup>) were removed from the infected coculture using beads coated with an anti-CD4 antibody that does not compete for gp120 binding (see Materials and Methods) (**Fig. 3.1.5A**). These uninfected bystander cells were replaced by the same number of autologous mock-infected cells (i.e., never exposed to HIV) prior to ADCC measurements. Importantly, this procedure did not affect the percentage of productively infected cells (percent GFP<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>+</sup>) in the cell culture (**Fig. 3.1.5A and B**). As expected, the replacement of uninfected bystander cells by mock-infected cells did not alter recognition of infected GFP<sup>+</sup> cells but decreased the proportion of uninfected bystander cells recognized by A32 (**Fig. 3.1.5C and D**). This replacement also dramatically reduced ADCC responses mediated by both A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera using both the granzyme B and NK cell activation assays (**Fig. 3.1.6**). Finally, removal of bystander cells resulted in a positive correlation between the abilities of A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera to recognize infected cells and trigger ADCC responses (**Fig. 3.1.6E**). Thus, uninfected bystander cells greatly influence the measurement of ADCC responses by assays that cannot distinguish infected from uninfected cells.

### **Measurement of ADCC responses using gp120-coated cells preferentially detects CD4i-mediated ADCC responses.**

Cells coated with recombinant gp120 are frequently used as target cells to assess the ADCC activity of monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) or sera from HIV-1-infected or vaccinated individuals ([9](#), [14](#), [34](#), [40–50](#)). In these assays, CD4<sup>+</sup> target cells are incubated with recombinant gp120 monomers, which adopt a CD4-bound conformation on the target cells and expose surfaces of the protein that are normally occluded in native Env trimers ([51](#)). We thus evaluated Ab binding and ADCC responses using gp120-coated target cells. The NK cell-resistant cell line CEM.NKr was coated with recombinant gp120 and subsequently used as target cells to measure ADCC ([41](#)). As predicted from results in **Fig. 3.1.1**, gp120-coated CEM.NKr cells were efficiently recognized by A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera but not by HIV<sup>-</sup> sera (**Fig. 3.1.7A and B**) or PGT126 and 3BNC117 (**Fig. 3.1.7A and B**). This was also the case when the rapid fluorometric ADCC assay (RFADCC assay) ([41](#)), which uses gp120-coated target cells to detect ADCC responses, was used for analysis ([12](#), [14](#), [40](#), [43](#), [44](#), [52](#)). As presented in **Fig. 3.1.7C and D and 3.1.S6**, robust responses were detected

with A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera but not with PGT126, 3BNC117, or HIV<sup>-</sup> sera (**Fig. 3.1.7C and D**). Thus, gp120-coated target cells detected ADCC responses largely mediated by CD4i antibodies and not by bNAbs capable of recognizing functional Env trimers, such as antibodies to the CD4-binding site or to a proteoglycan epitope in the V3 region.

### **A32 preferentially recognizes CD4<sup>+</sup> p24<sup>-</sup> cells not expressing HIV-1 *gag-pol* mRNA.**

Our results suggest that A32 preferentially targets uninfected bystander cells rather than productively infected cells (**Fig. 3.1.2 and 3.1.5**), although anti-cluster A Abs, such as A32, were initially identified as potent ADCC-mediating Abs (9, 14). Therefore, we could not exclude the possibility that the cells detected as bystander cells in our assays were infected but below the limit of detection. To investigate this possibility, we used a previously described RNA-flow fluorescence *in situ* hybridization (FISH) method (53, 54). This method identifies productively infected cells by visualizing cellular HIV-1 *gag-pol* mRNA by *in situ* RNA hybridization and intracellular Ab staining for the HIV-1 p24 protein. This approach is 1,000-fold more sensitive than p24 staining alone, with a detection limit of 0.5 to 1 *gag-pol* mRNA<sup>+</sup>/p24 protein<sup>+</sup> infected cell per million CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells (53, 54). The sensitivity of the assay is high, since a cell is reliably identified as *gag-pol* mRNA<sup>+</sup> if it contains more than 20 copies of HIV-1 mRNA. Thus, this technique can distinguish infected cells from uninfected bystander cells with high specificity and sensitivity.

For these experiments, primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with the NL4.3 ADA GFP WT virus, and 48 h post-infection, the average percentage of infection was 8.0%. Infected cells were stained first with A32 before staining for phenotypic markers, such as CD4. Cells were then fixed and permeabilized to allow detection of the HIV-1 p24 antigen and *gag-pol* mRNA. We first tested whether CD4 T cells recognized by A32 were positive for *gag-pol* mRNA (**Fig. 3.1.8A and 3.1.B**) but found that less than 2% of these cells contained p24 protein or *gag-pol* mRNA. In contrast, the vast majority of A32- negative cells were positive for p24 protein (73.03%) or *gag-pol* mRNA (78.04%). This confirmed that the vast majority of CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells recognized by A32 are uninfected bystander cells.

It remained possible, however, that the cells detected as p24<sup>-</sup> *gag-pol* mRNA<sup>-</sup> were in a very early stage of infection, before viral protein and mRNA could be detected. Indeed, previous studies have suggested that A32-like epitopes become transiently exposed during viral entry (55, 56). To investigate this possibility, uninfected bystander (GFP<sup>-</sup>) cells were sorted by flow cytometry to determine how many could become productively infected. After 5 additional days in cell culture, less than 3% of sorted GFP<sup>-</sup> cells became infected (Fig. 3.1.S7). Thus, most cells recognized by A32 are neither productively infected nor in a very early stage of infection.

Since Env-CD4 interaction is critical for exposure of the A32 epitope (5-7), we next analyzed the RNA-flow FISH results based on p24 and CD4 expression. As shown in Fig. 3.1.8C and D, CD4<sup>+</sup> p24<sup>-</sup> cells were efficiently recognized by A32 (blue bars) but remained almost exclusively negative for *gag-pol* mRNA (red bars). Inversely, the CD4<sup>-</sup> p24<sup>+</sup> population was largely positive for *gag-pol* mRNA but was not recognized by A32. More recent studies suggested that the A32 epitope could be exposed on a fraction of p24<sup>+</sup> cells because of residual CD4 expression (42, 57, 58). Therefore, we next quantified the recognition by A32 and infection of these p24<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>+</sup> cells by RNA-flow FISH (dark gray box, Fig. 3.1.8C). Although this rare population was indeed recognized, only a fraction of A32-positive cells was productively infected (~20%). Similar results were obtained with primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with an X4-tropic virus (Fig. 3.1.S8). Finally, we determined the proportion of *gag-pol* mRNA<sup>+</sup> cells that were both p24<sup>+</sup> and CD4<sup>+</sup> and found less than 5% of such cells that could be recognized by A32 (Fig. 3.1.8E). We also performed the reverse analysis by first identifying A32<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells and then determining how many of those cells were both p24 and CD4 positive. Since only ~1% of such cells were CD4<sup>+</sup> p24<sup>+</sup> (Fig. 3.1.8F), it seems clear that A32<sup>+</sup> cells represent only a minuscule fraction of productively HIV-1-infected CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells.

To determine whether *gag-pol* mRNA-containing CD4<sup>+</sup> p24<sup>+</sup> cells were present in the peripheral blood of HIV-1-infected individuals, we isolated CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from the blood of untreated chronically HIV-1-infected individuals, rested them overnight without stimulation, and then performed the RNA-flow FISH assay (Fig. 3.1.9A and B). Again, the CD4<sup>+</sup> p24<sup>+</sup> cell population represented only a minimal fraction of the *gag-pol* mRNA<sup>+</sup> cells. Therefore, *in vivo* A32 is unlikely to recognize most HIV-1-infected cells.

### 3.2.6 DISCUSSION

The conformation adopted by Env at the cell surface has considerable influence on Ab recognition and ADCC responses (2). In its unliganded form, Env from most primary virus samples adopts a “closed” trimeric conformation, preferentially recognized by bNAbs but not by CD4i Abs, which are abundant in plasma from most HIV-1-infected individuals (2, 4, 10, 15–18, 23, 59, 60, 86). One of the mechanisms that HIV-1 has developed to avoid exposing Env CD4i epitopes is the downregulation of CD4 cell surface expression. This is achieved in a two-step process. First, during the early phases of the HIV-1 replication cycle, Nef downregulates CD4 from the plasma membrane. Second, Vpu, expressed from a bicistronic mRNA also coding for Env, induces CD4 degradation through an endoplasmic reticulum (ER)-associated protein degradation (ERAD) mechanism in the ER (61). The action of Vpu liberates Env from CD4-dependent retention in the ER (62), allowing its trafficking to the plasma membrane in a “closed” conformation in which CD4i epitopes are occluded by oligomerization. These epitopes, however, are exposed in shed gp120 monomers that are released by the dissociation of the non-covalent gp120-gp41 interactions. Interestingly, *in vitro* experiments have shown that the binding of shed gp120 to uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells enables recognition of these cells by CD4i antibodies (16). Of note, this was seen using a variety of HIV-1 variants, including primary or transmitted founder viruses (Fig. 3.1.1 and 3.1.S2) (16, 17, 58, 63), as well as simian-human immunodeficiency virus (SHIV) infectious molecular clones (16).

Here, we demonstrate that the uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cell population, which is coated with shed gp120, represents a confounding factor when measuring ADCC responses *in vitro*. Using assays that are unable to differentiate infected from uninfected cell populations, we observed strong killing mediated by A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (Fig. 3.1.3). This ADCC activity was not correlated with the inability of these antibodies to recognize infected cells (Fig. 3.1.1 and 3.1.4). Replacement of gp120-coated uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells with autologous mock-infected cells confirmed that most of the detected activities were directed against uninfected CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells (Fig. 3.1.5 and 3.1.6). Using a sensitive RNA-flow FISH method, we next showed that A32 preferentially recognizes CD4<sup>+</sup> cells that are negative for HIV-1 p24 and *gag-pol* mRNA (Fig. 3.1.8), while fewer than 2% of productively infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup> *gag-pol* mRNA<sup>+</sup>) were recognized

by this antibody. Although this population remains to be defined further, these cells likely represent virus-coated cells on which the A32 epitope has been transiently exposed as a result of the high density of Env-CD4 interactions, a possibility supported by the fact that they do not form a distinct population in FACS analyses but form a shoulder of the p24-negative population. The extent to which this cell population exists *in vivo*, and the ability of Fc $\gamma$  receptor-bearing cells to gain access to CD4i epitopes, remains unknown. In contrast, the vast majority of productively infected cells were CD4<sup>-</sup>, both *in vitro* and in *ex vivo* samples from HIV-1-infected individuals. Consistent with poor recognition of infected cells by A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera, *in vitro* assays able to determine ADCC responses against infected cells failed to detect robust ADCC responses mediated by these ligands (**Fig. 3.1.2**). This was not due to a lack of sensitivity, since these assays readily detected ADCC responses mediated by the bNAbs PGT126 and 3BNC117 (**Fig. 3.1.2**). Thus, assays measuring responses on the total population missed the ADCC activity mediated by these bNAbs.

The results of our study highlight the difficulties in selecting an appropriate assay to measure ADCC. If ADCC is measured on the total population (granzyme B and NK cell activation), A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera appear to mediate a stronger ADCC response than PGT126 and 3BNC117. On the other hand, assays that can evaluate responses against infected cells show the opposite: PGT126 and 3BNC117 mediate significantly higher ADCC responses than A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. It seems clear that ligand recognition of gp120-coated uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells is, at least in part, responsible for these differences. Indeed, removal of these cells significantly reduced the ADCC activity detected for A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. Therefore, the differential recognition of the uninfected bystander cell population by any given ligand has a significant impact on *in vitro* ADCC measurements. It is well established that HIV-1 accessory proteins Nef and Vpu protect HIV-1-infected cells from ADCC responses ([5](#), [7](#), [10](#), [15](#), [19–21](#), [64](#), [65](#)). Assays measuring the elimination of infected cells were able to confirm these observations (**Fig. 3.1.2, 3.1.S3, and 3.1.S4**), while those that measure the total population (granzyme B and NK cell activation) failed to do so (**Fig. 3.1.3**). Thus, the presence of gp120-coated uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells confounds *in vitro* ADCC measurements.



Previous reports demonstrated that the majority of ADCC activity present in HIV<sup>+</sup> sera is mediated by anti-cluster A antibodies (9–11, 14). These antibodies preferentially target Env in its CD4-bound conformation (5, 8). Intriguingly, we observed variable ADCC activity among the different HIV<sup>+</sup> sera tested (Fig. 3.1.2, 3.1.3, and 3.1.6). It is possible that differences in their concentration in sera account for some of this variability. However, we cannot rule out that the presence of additional ADCC-mediating Abs that do not require the CD4-bound conformation of Env to recognize infected cells, or that target the gp41, might also contribute to this variable ADCC activity.

While passive administration of ADCC-mediating nnAbs, including A32, has failed to protect macaques against simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV) or SHIV challenges (66–70), several studies have identified ADCC responses measured against total cell population or gp120-coated target cells as correlates of protection in these same animal models (45, 71–74). Moreover, CD4i vaccines have been reported to protect macaques from viral challenge (45, 72). Since Env conformation greatly influences ADCC responses (8), it is possible that the conformation of Env in the challenge viruses impacted the reported protection efficacy. It is conceivable that the Env of these challenge stocks sampled a slightly more “open” conformation, readily recognized by CD4i Abs but not present in primary viruses (8). For example, non-neutralizing CD4i Abs with ADCC activity, in the presence of low levels in plasma of IgA Env-specific Abs, inversely correlated with HIV-1 acquisition in the RV144 trial (75). A recent study suggested that the presence of a naturally occurring histidine at position 375 (H375) in the Phe43 cavity of the predominant strain (CRF01\_AE) replicating in Thailand might have contributed to the efficacy of the trial by spontaneously exposing epitopes recognized by ADCC-mediating antibodies elicited by the RV144 vaccine regimen (76). Our results warrant further studies to assess the conformation of Envs of current SHIVs used in vaccine efficacy studies.

Since Env conformation and the nature of target cells greatly influence ADCC results, our study highlights the need for careful assay selection. Assays measuring ADCC responses on the total cell population (Fig. 3.1.3 to 3.1.6) or using target cells coated with recombinant gp120 (Fig. 3.1.7) or infected with viruses defective for Nef and Vpu expression (Fig. 3.1.2) favor the detection of ADCC responses mediated by CD4i Abs over those induced by bNAbs. Assays measuring

ADCC responses on the infected-cell population are better suited to evaluate responses mediated by Abs recognizing the CD4-binding site or trimeric Env. Thus, these parameters must be carefully considered before selecting assays for characterizing HIV-1-specific ADCC responses when evaluating responses mediated by monoclonal Abs, mechanisms of immune evasion, or correlates of vaccine protection.

### **3.2.7 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

#### **Ethics statement**

Written informed consent was obtained from all study participants (the Montreal Primary HIV Infection Cohort [77, 78] and the Canadian Cohort of HIV Infected Slow Progressors [79–81]), and research adhered to the ethical guidelines of the Centre de Recherche du CHUM (CRCHUM) and was reviewed and approved by the CRCHUM institutional review board (ethics committee approval number CE 16.164-CA). Research adhered to the standards indicated by the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants were adult and provided informed written consent prior to enrollment in accordance with institutional review board approval.

#### **Cell lines and isolation of primary cells**

HEK293T human embryonic kidney cells (obtained from ATCC) and CEM.NKr-CCR5-sLTR-Luc cells were grown as previously described (7, 15). Primary human PBMCs, NK cells, and CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were isolated, activated, and cultured as previously described (7, 15) and detailed in the supplemental material.

#### **Viral production and infections**

To achieve the same level of infection among the different IMCs (infectious molecular clones) tested, vesicular stomatitis virus G (VSVG)-pseudotyped HIV-1 viruses were produced and titrated as previously described (5). Viruses were then used to infect activated primary CD4 T cells from healthy HIV-1-negative donors or CEM.NKr-CCR5-sLTR-Luc cells by spin infection at 800 × g for 1 h in 96-well plates at 25°C.

#### **Antibodies and sera**

A detailed list of the Abs used for cell surface staining, ADCC measurement, and RNA flow analysis is presented in the supplemental material. Sera from HIV-infected and uninfected donors were collected, heat inactivated, and conserved as previously described (7, 15). A random number generator (QuickCalcs; GraphPad, San Diego, CA) was used to randomly select a number of sera for each experiment.

### **Plasmids and site-directed mutagenesis**

pNL43-ADA(Env)-GFP.IRES.Nef proviral vectors containing intact or defective *nef* and *vpu* genes, as well as the VSVG-encoding plasmid (pSVCMV-IN-VSV-G), were previously described (5). The plasmid encoding the HIV-1 transmitted founder (TF) IMC CH77 containing intact or defective *nef* and *vpu* genes was previously described (10, 15, 82–85).

### **Flow cytometry analysis of cell surface staining**

Cell surface staining was performed as previously described (5, 15). Binding of HIV-1-infected cells by sera (1:1,000 dilution), anti-Env MAbs (A32, PGT126, or 3BNC117) (5 µg/ml), or anti-CD4 mAbs (1 µg/ml) was performed at 48 h post-infection. Cells infected with HIV-1 primary isolates were stained intracellularly for HIV-1 p24, using the Cytofix/Cytoperm fixation/permeabilization kit (BD Biosciences, Mississauga, ON, Canada) and the fluorescent anti-p24 mAb (phycoerythrin [PE]-conjugated anti-p24, clone KC57; Beckman Coulter/Immunotech). The percentage of infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup> or GFP<sup>+</sup> cells) was determined by gating the living cell population on the basis of the AquaVivid viability dye staining. Samples were analyzed on an LSR II cytometer (BD Biosciences), and data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star, Ashland, OR, USA).

### **Replacement of uninfected bystander cells by autologous mock cells**

Uninfected bystander cells (GFP<sup>-</sup> CD4<sup>high</sup> T cells) were removed from the target cell population using the Dynabeads CD4-positive selection kit (Invitrogen) at a ratio of 25 µl of beads per million cells. Enrichment of infected primary GFP<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>low</sup> T cells was assessed by cell surface staining with the anti-CD4 OKT4 Ab (Fig. 3.1.5A). Uninfected bystander cells were then replaced by the same number of autologous mock cells prior to staining with A32 or performing ADCC measurements.

## ADCC measurements

ADCC responses were measured at 48 h post-infection, as described in detail in the supplemental material. For the FACS-based, granzyme B, and NK cell activation assays, mAbs were used at 5 µg/ml and human sera were used at a 1:1,000 dilution. For the luciferase assay, mAbs were used at 0.0024, 0.0098, 0.0390, 0.1563, 0.6250, 2.5, 10, or 40 µg/ml and human sera were used at a dilution of 1:100, 1:400, 1:1,600, 1:6,400, 1:25,600, 1:102,400, 1:409,600, or 1:1,638,400. For the RFADCC assay, mAbs were used at 0.008, 0.04, 0.2, 1, and 5 µg/ml and human sera were used at a dilution of 1:100, 1:400, 1:1,600, 1:6,400, or 1:25,600.

## RNA-flow analysis

Samples were processed using the HIV RNA/Gag RNA flow assay as previously described ([53](#), [54](#)). Briefly, for *in vitro* studies, primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected for 48 h were collected and indirectly surface stained for HIV Env using A32 (as described above) before further staining for phenotypic markers. For *ex vivo* studies, CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were isolated from chronically HIV-infected, untreated individuals and rested overnight in the presence of antiretrovirals (zidovudine [AZT] plus T20) in order to block new cycles of infection. In all experiments, cells were labeled with a viability dye (eFluor 506 fixable viability dye; ThermoFisher Scientific) and surface stained for phenotypic markers (CD3, CD4, and exclusion [CD8, CD14, and CD19]), before fixation, permeabilization, and intracellular staining for HIV p24. HIV *gag-pol* mRNA was labeled using the ThermoFisher PrimeFlow kit using probes designed against JR-CSF ([53](#), [54](#)). Samples were acquired on a BD LSR II cytometer (BD Biosciences), and data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star).

## Statistical analyses

Statistics were analyzed using GraphPad Prism version 6.0.1 (GraphPad, San Diego, CA). Every data set was tested for statistical normality, and this information was used to apply the appropriate (parametric or nonparametric) statistical test. *P* values of < 0.05 were considered significant.

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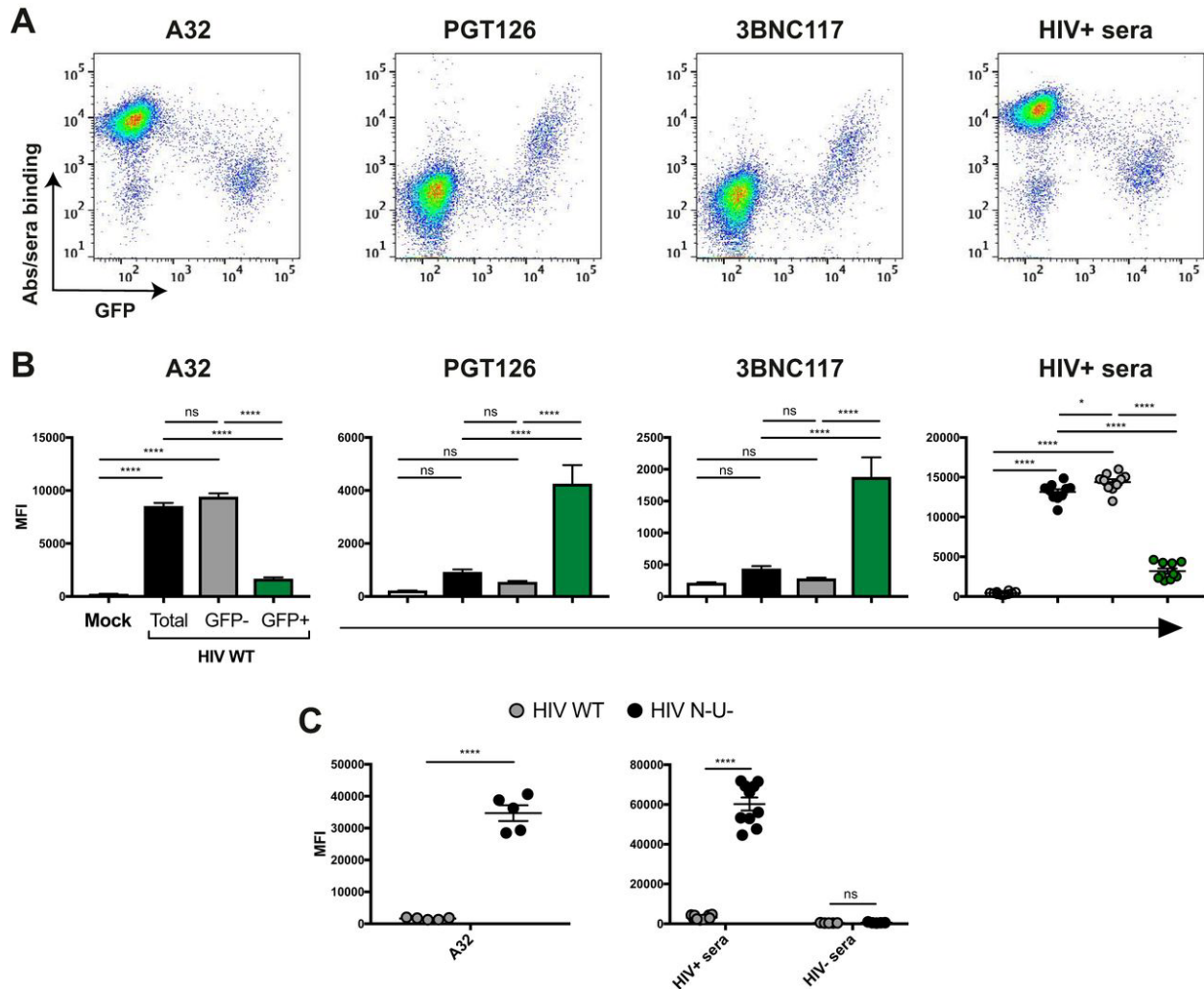
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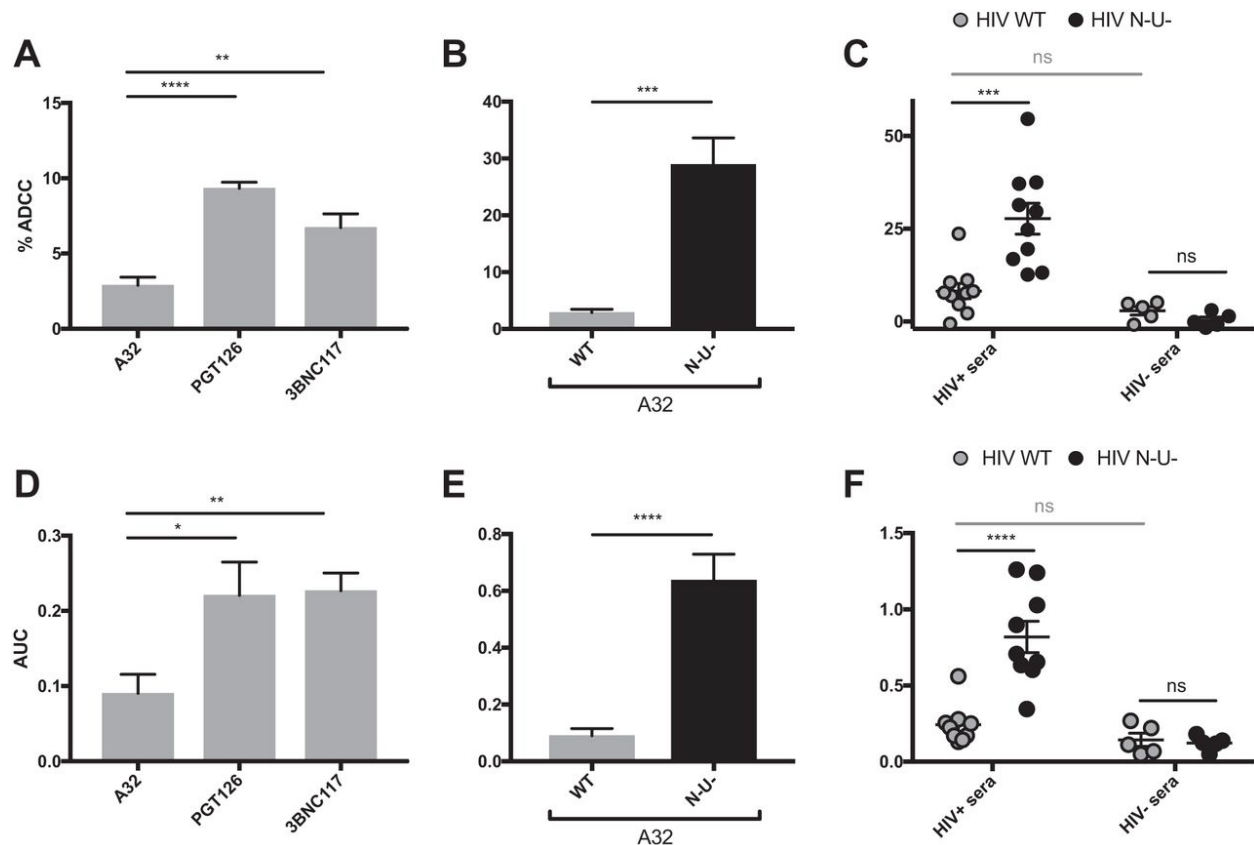
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### 3.2.10 FIGURES



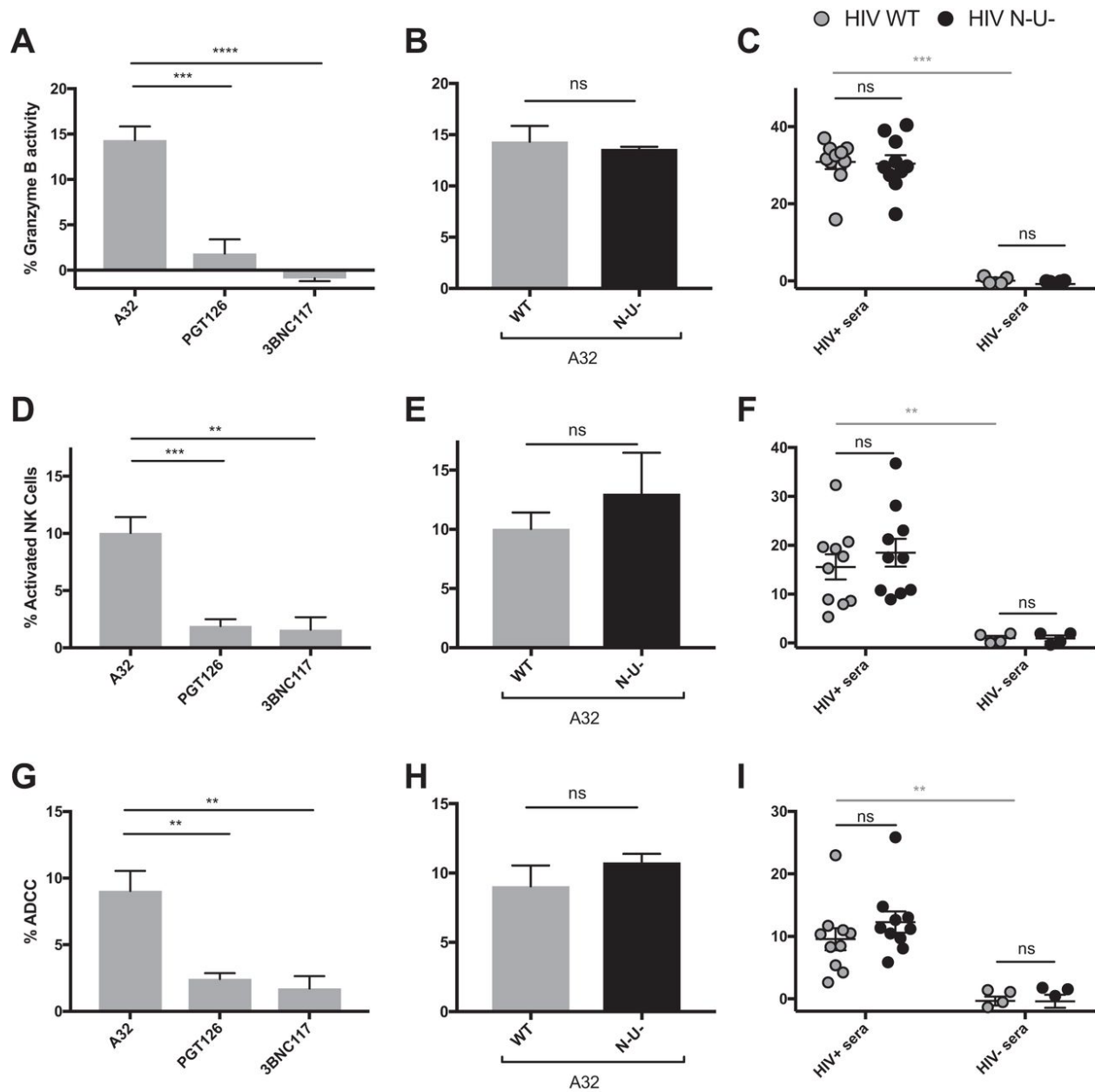
**Figure 3.1.1 - Differential recognition of infected and uninfected bystander cells by ADCC-mediating Abs.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were mock infected or infected with the NL4.3 ADA GFP virus, either wild type (HIV WT) or defective for Nef and Vpu expression (HIV N<sup>-</sup> U<sup>-</sup>). Forty-eight hours post-infection, cells were stained with the anti-Env Ab (5 µg/ml) A32, PGT126, or 3BNC117 or sera (1:1,000 dilution) from 10 HIV-1-infected (HIV<sup>+</sup> sera) or 5 uninfected (HIV<sup>-</sup> sera) individuals, followed by appropriate secondary Abs. (A) Dot plots depicting representative staining of WT-infected cells. (B) Mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained for at least 5 independent stainings with the different Abs and 10 HIV<sup>+</sup> or 5 HIV<sup>-</sup> sera. (C) Graphs represent the MFI obtained for 5 independent staining experiments with A32 and 10 HIV<sup>+</sup> or 5 HIV<sup>-</sup> sera on cells infected with WT and N<sup>-</sup> U<sup>-</sup> virus. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested using ordinary one-way analysis of variance (B) or unpaired t test or Mann-Whitney test (C) (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).



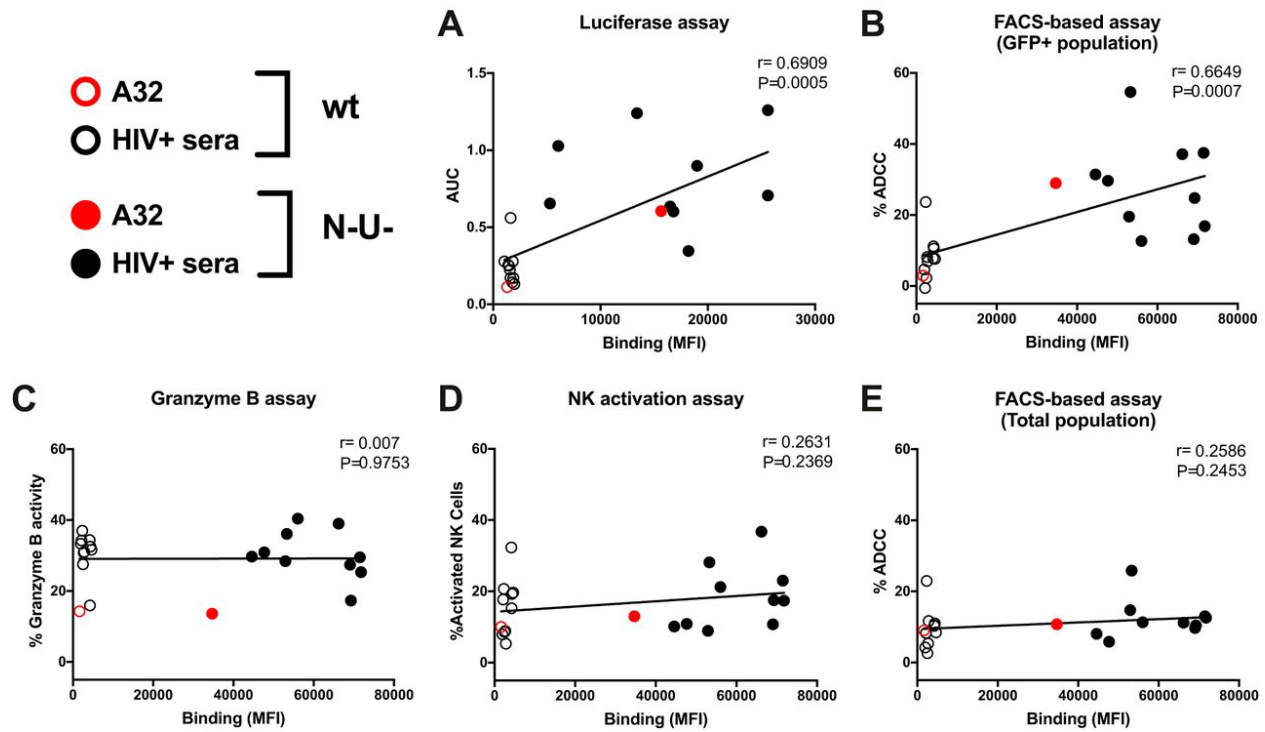
**Figure 3.1.2 - ADCC responses detected with assays measuring the elimination of infected cells.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells (A to C) or CEM.NKr-CCR5-sLTR-Luc cells (D to F) infected with the NL4.3 ADA GFP virus, either wild-type (HIV WT) (depicted in gray) or defective for Nef and Vpu expression (HIV N<sup>-</sup>U<sup>-</sup>) (depicted in black) were used as target cells with the FACS-based infected-cell elimination assay (A to C) or the luciferase assays (D to F). (A and D) ADCC responses detected with the anti-Env Abs A32, PGT126, and 3BNC117 against cells infected with the WT virus. (B, C, E, and F) ADCC responses detected with A32 (B and E) or HIV and HIV sera (C and F) against cells infected with WT or N<sup>-</sup>U<sup>-</sup> viruses. All graphs shown represent ADCC responses obtained from at least 5 independent experiments. For the FACS-based assay, mAbs were used at 5 µg/ml and human sera were used at a 1:1,000 dilution. For the luciferase assay, area under the curve (AUC) values were calculated using increased concentrations of mAbs (0.0024, 0.0098, 0.0390, 0.1563, 0.6250, 2.5, and 10 µg/ml) and increased dilutions of human sera (1:100, 1:400, 1:1,600, 1:6,400, 1:25,600, and 1:102,400). Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested using unpaired t test or Mann-Whitney test (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).



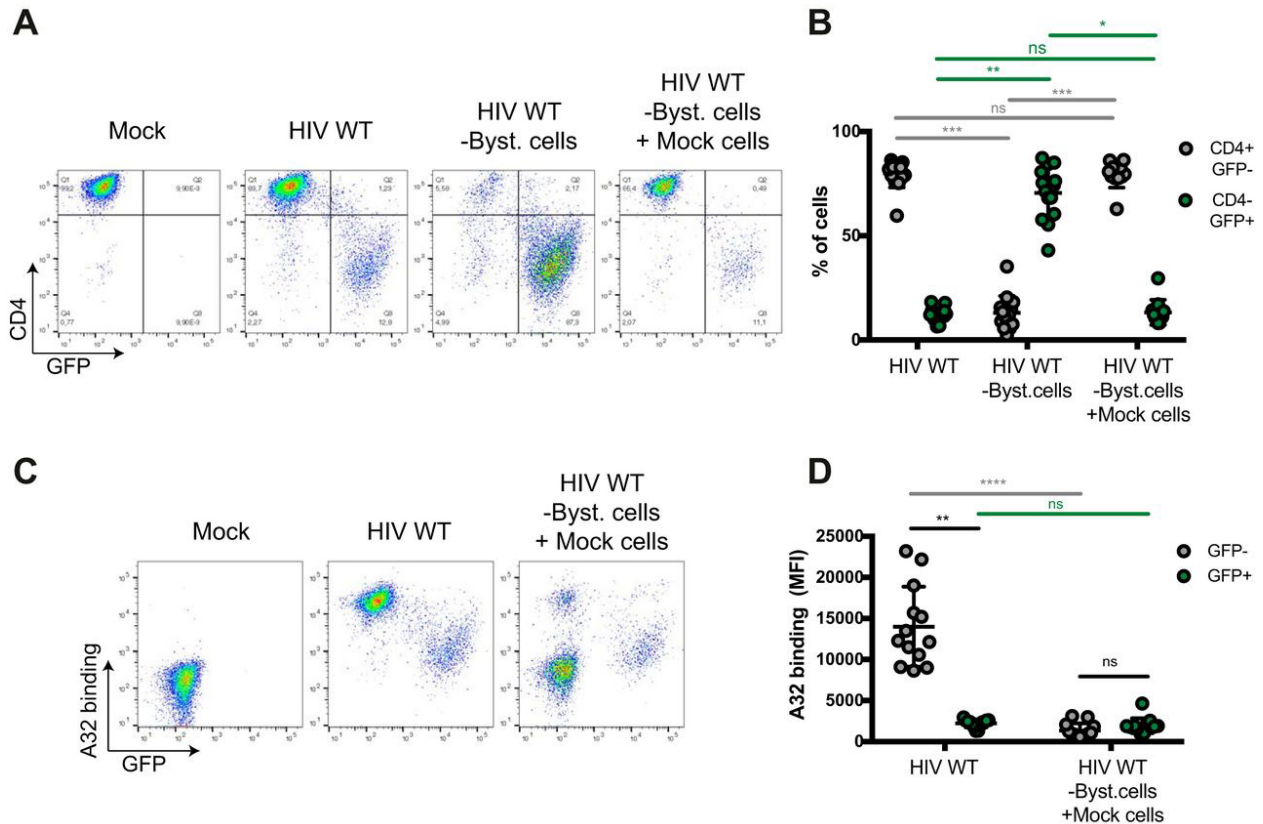
**Figure 3.1.3 - ADCC responses detected with assays relying on the total cell population.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with the NL4.3 ADA GFP virus, either wild-type (HIV WT) (depicted in gray) or defective for Nef and Vpu expression (HIV N<sup>-</sup> U<sup>-</sup>) (depicted in black), were used as target cells in the granzyme B assay (**A to C**), the NK cell activation assay (**D to F**), or FACS-based assays (gating on the total cell population) (**G to I**). (**A, D, and G**) ADCC responses detected with the anti-Env mAbs (5 µg/ml) A32, PGT126, and 3BNC117 against cells infected with WT virus. (**B, C, E, F, H, and I**) ADCC responses mediated by A32 (**B, E, and H**) or HIV<sup>+</sup> and HIV<sup>-</sup> sera (1:1,000 dilution) (**C, F, and I**) against cells infected with WT or N<sup>-</sup> U<sup>-</sup> virus. All graphs shown represent ADCC responses obtained for at least 5 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested using unpaired t test or Mann-Whitney test (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).



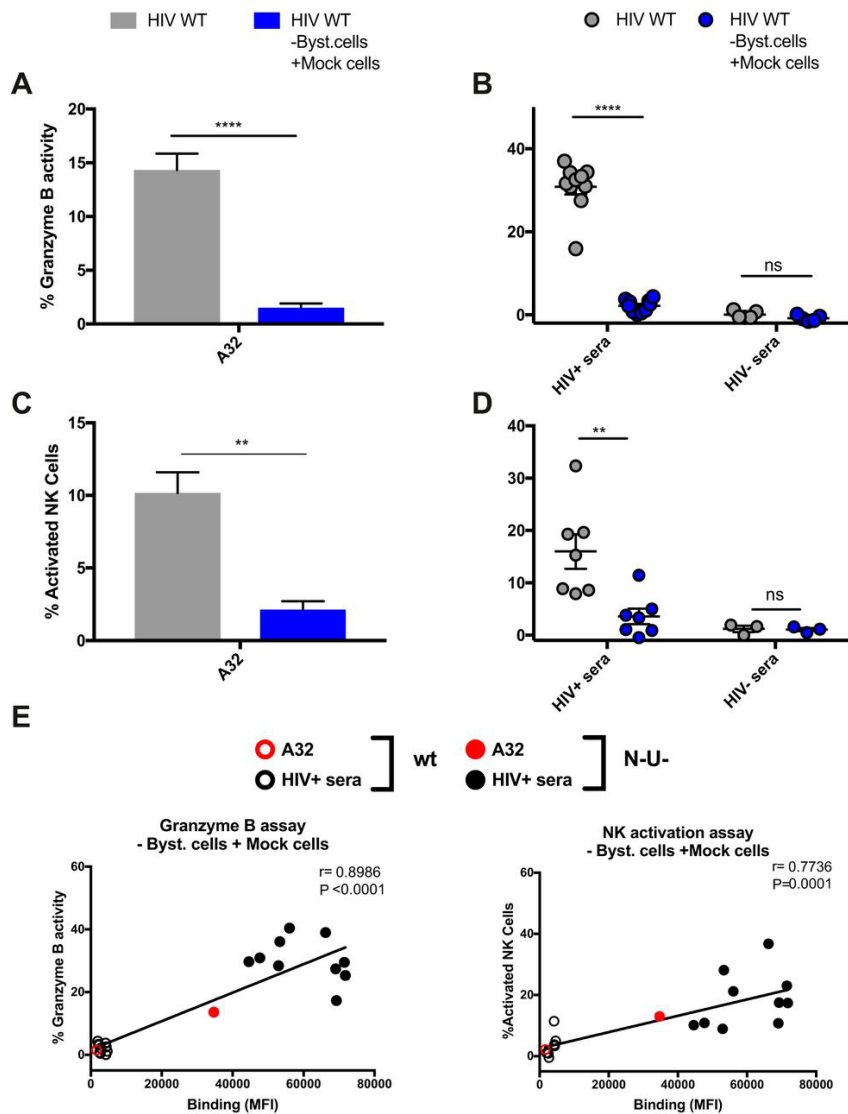
**Figure 3.1.4 - Recognition of infected cells correlates with ADCC responses when using assays measuring the elimination of the infected-cell population.**

Correlation between the ability of A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera to recognize cells infected with NL4.3 ADA GFP, either wild-type (WT) or defective for Nef and Vpu expression (N<sup>-</sup> U<sup>-</sup>), and the ADCC responses detected against these cells using the luciferase assays (A), the FACS-based assay (on the GFP cell population) (B), the granzyme B assay (C), the NK cell activation assay (D), or the FACS-based assay (E) (on the total cell population) was calculated using a Pearson correlation test.



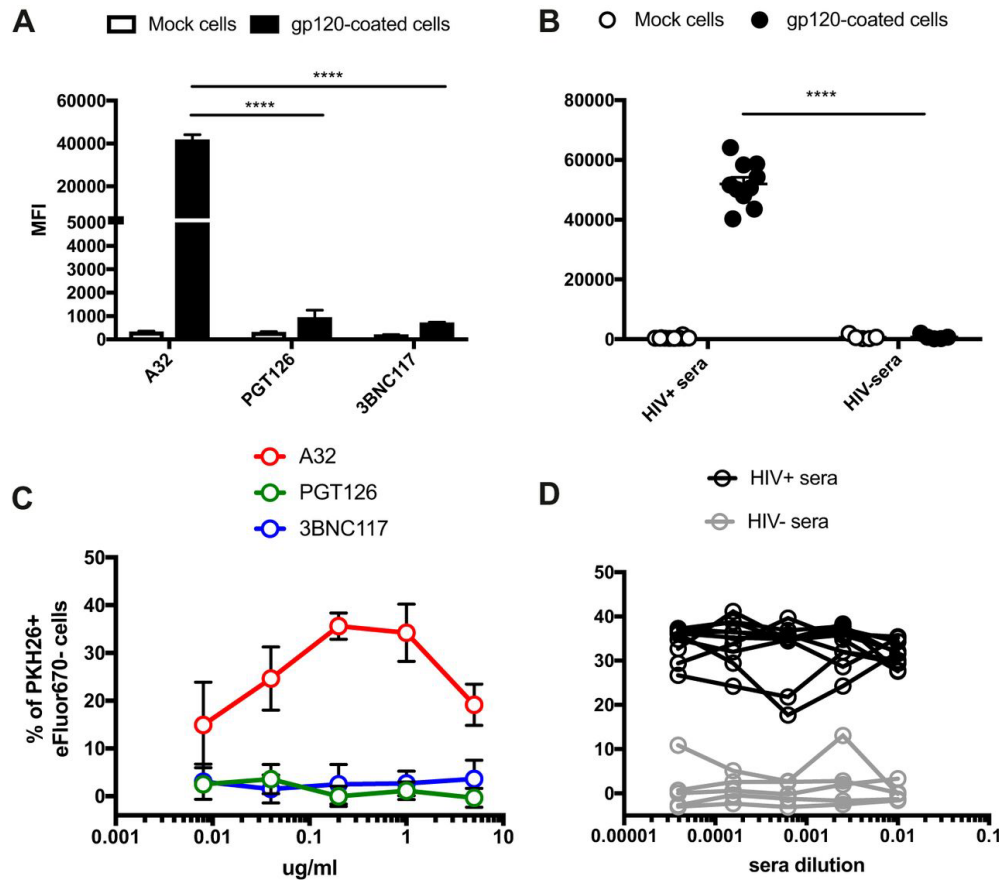
**Figure 3.1.5 - Replacement of uninfected bystander cells by autologous mock-infected cells reduces the proportion of cells recognized by A32.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were mock infected (Mock) or infected with the NL4.3 ADA GFP WT virus (HIV WT). Forty-eight hours post-infection, uninfected bystander CD4 cells were removed (HIV WT -Byst. cells) and replaced by the same number of autologous mock-infected cells (HIV WT -Byst. cells + Mock cells). Cells were stained with anti-CD4 (1 µg/ml) and A32 (5 µg/ml) Abs. **(A and C)** Representative staining for CD4 **(A)** and A32 **(C)**. **(B)** Percentage of CD4 GFP and CD4 GFP cells. **(D)** MFI obtained for the A32 staining for at least 13 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested using a Kruskal-Wallis test (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).



**Figure 3.1.6 - Replacement of uninfected bystander cells by autologous mock-infected cells strongly reduces the ADCC responses detected with granzyme B and NK cell activation assays.**

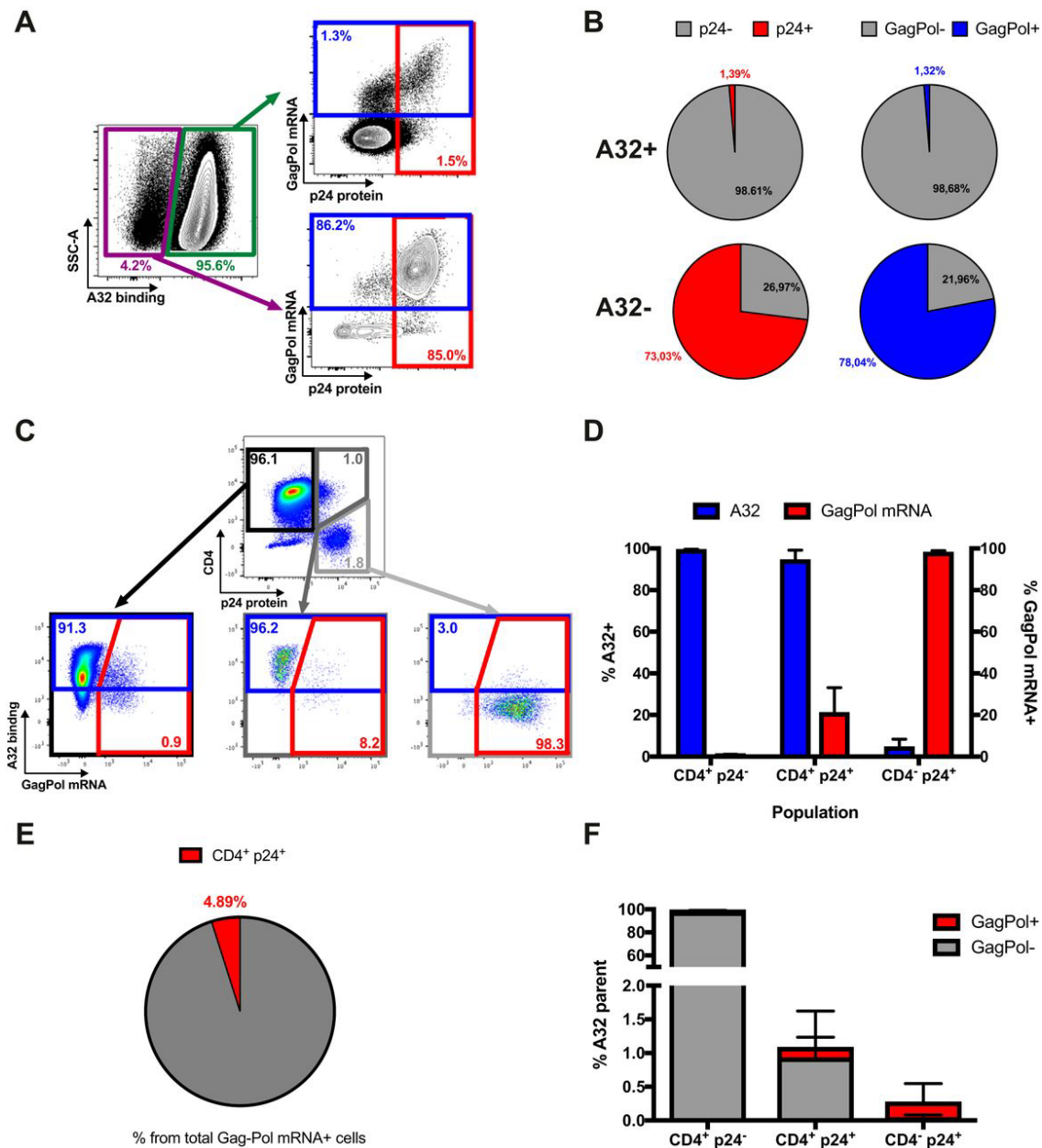
Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were mock infected (Mock) or infected with the NL4.3 ADA GFP WT virus (HIV WT). Forty-eight hours post-infection, uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were removed and replaced by the same number of autologous mock-infected cells (HIV WT -Byst. cells Mock cells) prior to ADCC measurements with the granzyme B assay (**A and B**) and the NK cell activation assay (**C and D**). (**A and C**) ADCC responses detected with A32 (5 µg/ml). (**B and D**) Responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> and HIV<sup>-</sup> sera (1:1,000 dilution). (**E**) A correlation between the ability of A32 and HIV sera to recognize infected cells and the ADCC responses detected with the granzyme B and NK cell activation assay was observed when the uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were replaced by autologous mock-infected cells in the context of a WT infection. All graphs shown represent ADCC responses obtained in at least 5 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested using unpaired t test or Mann-Whitney test (**A to D**) and a Pearson correlation test (**E**) (\*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).



**Figure 3.1.7 - Measurement of ADCC responses against gp120-coated target cells.**

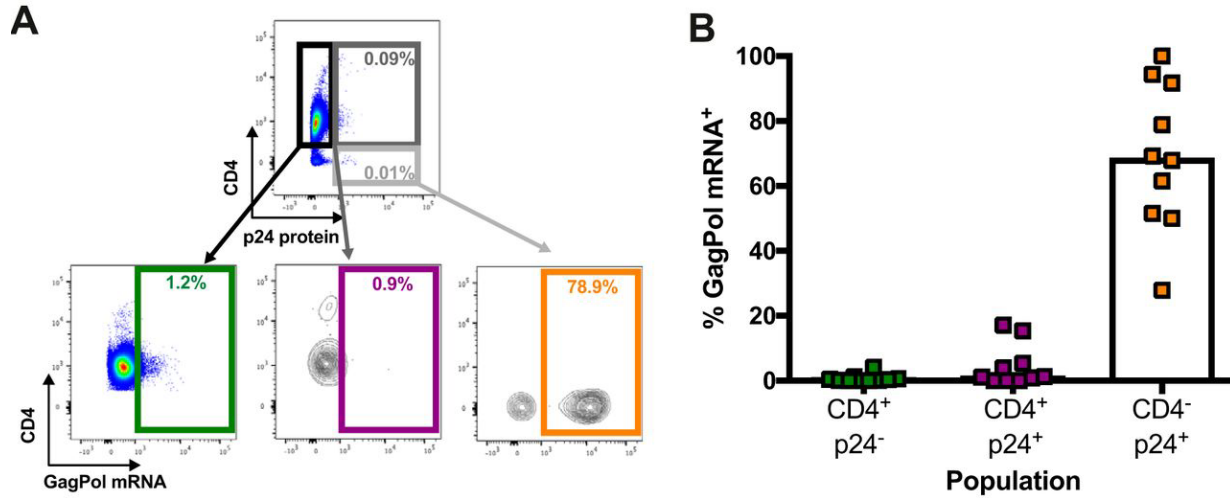
(**A and B**) Recognition of gp120-coated CEM.NK<sub>r</sub> cells by A32, PGT126, or 3BNC117 (**A**) and HIV or HIV sera (**B**). (**C and D**) ADCC responses detected using the RFADCC assay against gp120-coated cells with the anti-Env Ab A32, PGT126, or 3BNC117 (0.008, 0.04, 0.2, 1, and 5  $\mu\text{g/ml}$ ) (**C**) and HIV<sup>+</sup> or HIV<sup>-</sup> sera (1:100, 1:400, 1:1,600, 1:6,400, and 1:25,600 dilutions) (**D**). All graphs shown represent staining and ADCC responses obtained in at least 3 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means  $\pm$  standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested using unpaired t test (\*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ).





**Figure 3.1.8 - A32 preferentially binds to cells that are CD4<sup>+</sup> p24<sup>-</sup> gag-pol mRNA<sup>-</sup>.**

(A and B) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with NL3.4 ADA GFP WT virus were stained with A32, followed by appropriate secondary Abs. Cells were then stained for phenotypic markers (see Materials and Methods) prior to detection of HIV-1 p24 and *gag-pol* mRNA by RNA-flow FISH. (A) Example of flow cytometry gating strategy based on A32 binding. (B) Quantification of the percentage of cells positive for HIV-1 p24 or *gag-pol* mRNA based on A32 binding. (C) Example of flow cytometry gating based on p24 and CD4 expression. (D) Quantification of the percentage of cells positive for A32 binding and *gag-pol* mRNA based on CD4 and p24 levels. (E) Quantification of the percentage of p24<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>+</sup> cells among the cells positive for *gag-pol* mRNA. (F) Quantification of the percentage of cells that are CD4<sup>+</sup> p24<sup>-</sup>, CD4<sup>+</sup> p24<sup>+</sup>, or CD4<sup>-</sup> p24<sup>+</sup> among the cells recognized by A32. Error bars indicate means  $\pm$  standard errors of the means of at least 4 independent experiments.



**Figure 3.1.9 - The CD4<sup>+</sup> p24<sup>+</sup> cell population represents a minimal fraction of the *gag-pol* mRNA<sup>+</sup> cells in HIV-1-infected individuals.**

CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells isolated from chronically HIV-infected, untreated individuals were rested overnight. Cells were then stained for phenotypic markers (see Materials and Methods) prior to detection of HIV-1 p24 and *gag-pol* mRNA by RNA-flow FISH. (A) Example of flow cytometry gating based on p24 and CD4 expression. (B) Quantification of the percentage of cells positive for *gag-pol* mRNA based on CD4 and p24 levels. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means of data obtained with 10 HIV-1-infected individuals.

### 3.2.11 SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

#### Primary cells

PBMC were obtained by leukapheresis. NK cells and CD4<sup>+</sup> T lymphocytes were purified from resting PBMCs by negative selection using immunomagnetic beads per the manufacturer's instructions (StemCell Technologies, Vancouver, BC). NK cells were cultured overnight in RPMI 1640 complete medium supplemented with 20% fetal bovine serum and 100 µg/mL penicillin-streptomycin before use. CD4<sup>+</sup> T lymphocytes were activated with phytohemagglutinin-L (10 µg/mL) for 48 hours and then maintained in RPMI 1640 complete medium supplemented with rIL-2 (100 U/mL).

#### Antibodies

The following Abs were used as first Ab for cell surface staining: 1 µg/mL mouse anti-CD4 mAb OKT4 (14-0048-82; eBiosciences), 5 µg/mL human anti-HIV-1 Env mAbs A32, PGT126 (kindly provided by the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative), 3BNC117 (kindly provided by M.C. Nussenzweig, The Rockefeller University, New York, NY), 1 µg/mL of either Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated goat anti-mouse or goat anti-human Abs (Thermo Fisher Scientific) were used as secondary Abs. The following Abs were used for the NK cell activation assay: APC-conjugated anti-CD107a (BD Biosciences, H4A3), BV421-conjugated anti-CD3 (Biolegend, UCHT1), PE-conjugated anti-CD56 (BD Biosciences, NCAM16.2) and PE-Cy7-conjugated anti-IFN $\gamma$  (BD Biosciences, B27). The following Abs were used for RNA-flow analysis: BUV395-conjugated anti-CD3 (BD Biosciences, UCHT1), PE-Cy7-conjugated anti-CD4 (BD Biosciences, RPA-T4) BV510-conjugated anti-CD8 (Biolegend, SK1), BV510-conjugated anti-CD14 (Biolegend, M5E2) BV510-conjugated anti-CD19 (Biolegend, H1B19) and PE-conjugated anti-p24 (Beckman Coulter/Immunotech, KC57), while AquaVivid (Thermo Fisher Scientific) was used as viability dye.

#### ADCC measurements

#### FACS-based assay

Measurement of ADCC using the FACS-based assay was performed at 48h post-infection as previously described ([1-3](#)). Briefly, infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were stained with viability

(AquaVivid; Thermo Fisher Scientific) and cellular (cell proliferation dye eFluor670; eBioscience) markers and used as target cells. Autologous PBMC effector cells, stained with another cellular marker (cell proliferation dye eFluor450; eBioscience), were added at an effector: target ratio of 10:1 in 96-well V-bottom plates (Corning, Corning, NY). A 1:1,000 final dilution of sera or 5 µg/ml of ADCC-mediating mAbs were added to appropriate wells and cells were incubated for 15 min at room temperature. The plates were subsequently centrifuged for 1 min at 300 × g, and incubated at 37°C, 5% CO<sub>2</sub> for 5 to 6 h before being fixed in a 2% PBS-formaldehyde solution containing 5x10<sup>4</sup> flow cytometry particles/ml (AccuCount blank particles; 5.3 µm; Spherotech). Samples were analyzed on an LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences) and acquisition was set to acquire 1,000 flow cytometry particles, which allows the calculation of relative cell counts (2). Data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star). The percentage of ADCC was calculated with the following formula: (relative count of GFP<sup>+</sup> cells in targets plus effectors) - (relative count of GFP<sup>+</sup> cells in targets plus effectors plus Abs or sera) / (relative count of GFP<sup>+</sup> cells in targets) by gating infected live target cells. For cells infected with HIV-1 primary isolates, infected cells were identified by intracellular staining for HIV-1 p24. In that context, the percentage of ADCC was calculated with the following formula: (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in Targets plus Effectors) – (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in Targets plus Effectors plus sera) / (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in Targets) by gating on infected lived target cells.

### **Granzyme B assay**

Measurement of ADCC response using the Granzyme B assay was performed 48h post-infection according to the manufacturer's instructions (OncoImmunin, Gaithersburg, MD) and as previously described (4, 5). Briefly, infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were stained with a fluorescent target cell marker (TFL4; OncoImmunin, Gaithersburg, MD) and a viability marker (NFL1; OncoImmunin or AquaVivid; Thermo Fisher Scientific). Rested autologous purified NK cells were used as effector cells. Target and effector cells were counted and adjusted to reach a final effector: target ratio of 10:1. Twenty-five µl of each effector and target cell suspension and 75 µl of Granzyme B substrate (OncoImmunin) was dispensed into each well of a 96-well V-bottom plate (Corning). A 1:1,000 final dilution of sera or 5 µg/ml or ADCC-mediating Abs were added to appropriate wells and cells were incubated for 15 min at room temperature. The plates were subsequently centrifuged for 1 min at 300 × g and incubated for 1 h at 37°C and 5% CO<sub>2</sub>. After

two washes, cells were acquired on an LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences) and data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star). The percentage of Ab or sera-induced Granzyme B activity was calculated with the following formula: (Percentage of Granzyme B<sup>+</sup> target cells in targets plus effectors plus Abs or sera) - (Percentage of Granzyme B<sup>+</sup> target cells in targets plus effectors) per the gating strategy presented in **Fig 3.1.S5**.

### **NK cell activation assay**

Measurement of ADCC response using the NK cell activation assay was performed using a modified version of a previously described protocol (6). Briefly, primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected for 48h were co-cultured with autologous PBMC at an effector: target ratio of 5:1 in the presence of a 1:1,000 final dilution of sera or 5 µg/ml or ADCC-mediating Abs, anti-CD107a, Brefeldin A (Sigma) (5µg/ml) and Monensin (BD Biosciences) (6µg/ml) for 5h at 37°C. Control conditions included incubation of PBMC alone or incubation of PBMC with mock cells in the presence of sera or ADCC-mediating Abs. After incubation cells were surface stained with anti-CD3 and anti-CD56 Abs. Next, cells were fixed and permeabilized using the Cytofix/Cytoperm Fixation/Permeabilization Kit (BD Biosciences) and stained with anti-IFN $\gamma$  Ab. Samples were analyzed on an LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences) and data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star). The percentage of Ab or sera-induced NK cell activation was calculated with the following formula: (Percentage of NK cells (CD3<sup>-</sup> CD56<sup>+</sup>) positive for CD107a and/or IFN $\gamma$  in targets plus effectors plus Abs or sera) - (Percentage of NK cells (CD3<sup>-</sup> CD56<sup>+</sup>) positive for CD107a and/or IFN $\gamma$  in targets plus effectors) according to the gating strategy presented in **Fig 3.1.S5**.

### **Luciferase assay**

Measurement of ADCC responses using the Luciferase assay was performed as previously described (7). Briefly, CEM.NKR-CCR5-sLTR-Luc target cells, which express luciferase (Luc) under the control of a Tat-inducible promoter, were infected and used as target cells at 48h post-infection. Primary human PBMCs or NK cell line expressing human CD16 were used as effector cells. Target and effector cells were co-cultured for 6-8h, in triplicate, at an effector: target ratio of 10:1 in the presence of different concentrations of Abs (0.0024, 0.0098, 0.0390, 0.1563, 0.6250, 2.5, 10 or 40 µg/ml) or different dilution of human sera (1:100, 1:400, 1:1,600, 1:6,400, 1:25,600,

1:102,400, 1:409,600 or 1:1,638,400). The dose-dependent loss of Luc activity was measured as an indication of sera or Ab-mediated killing of productively-infected cells. Infected target cells incubated with effector cells in the absence of sera or Ab were used to measure maximal Luc activity, and uninfected target cells cultured with effector cells were used to determine background Luc activity. Area under the curve (AUC) values for ADCC were calculated as previously described (7). For experiments involving CH77 wt and N-U<sup>-</sup> viruses, the *vif* gene was deleted by site-directed mutagenesis. The nucleotides 62 and 63 in *vif* were deleted, causing a frameshift that resulted in an early stop codon (W21\*) while preserving the *pol* open reading frame.

### **RFADCC assay**

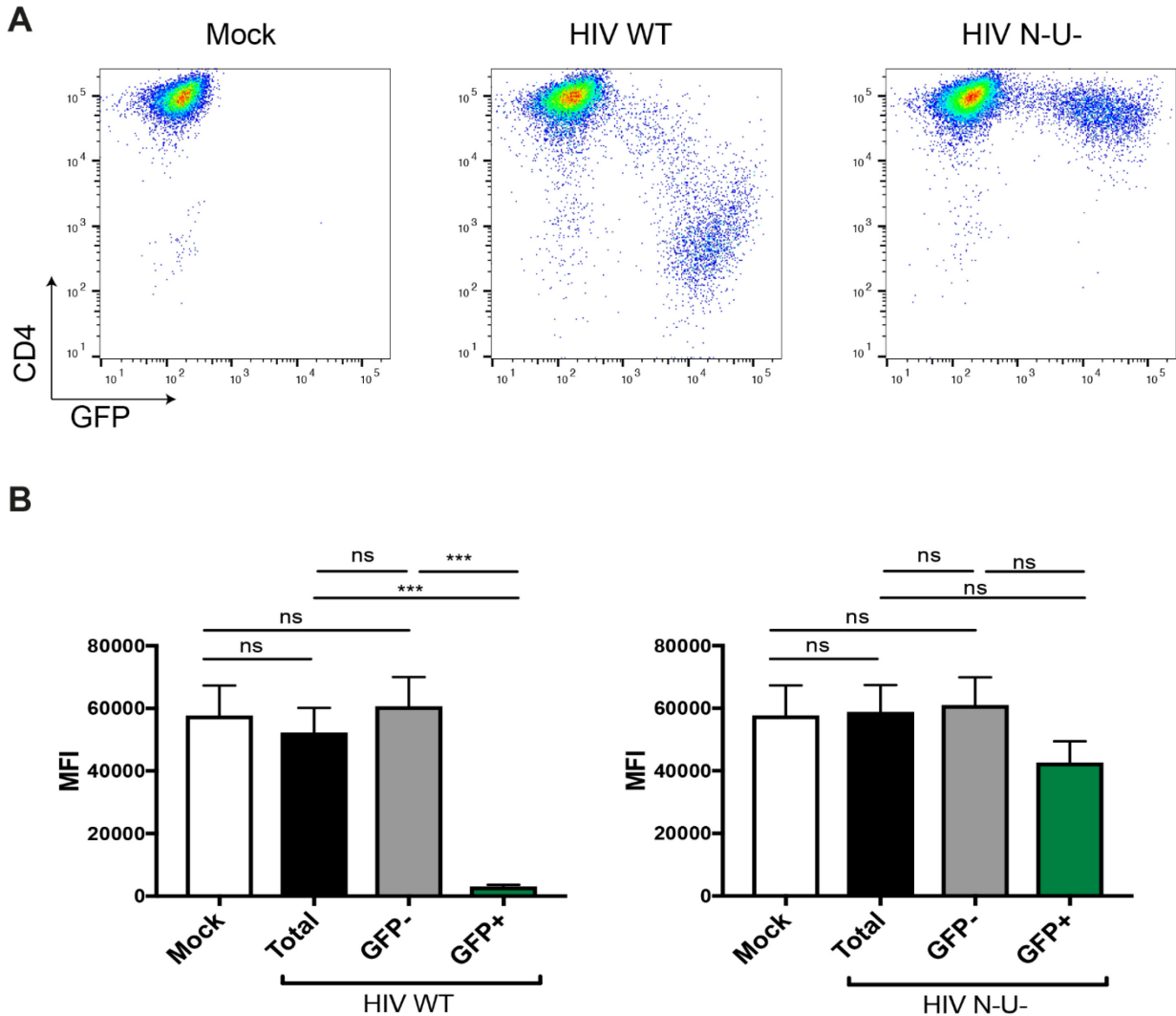
CEM.NKR-CCR5-sLTR-Luc target cells were coated or not with 1 µg/ml of recombinant gp120 protein derived from the HIV-1 YU2 strain for 30 minutes at 37°C, 5% CO<sub>2</sub>. Cells were then double stained with PKH26 red fluorescent cell linker (Sigma-Aldrich, USA) and the cellular proliferation marker eFluor670 (eBioscience) as previously described (2, 8, 9) Cells were then dispensed together with different concentration of Abs (0.008, 0.04, 0.2, 1 and 5 µg/ml) or different dilutions of sera (1:100, 1:400, 1:1,600, 1:6,400 and 1:25,600). After 15 min at room temperature, effector cells (Rested primary PBMCs) were added at an effector: target ratio of 50:1. Plates were centrifuged for 1 min at 300 × g and incubated for 4 h at 37°C. Cells were washed, fixed and acquired on an LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences). Data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star). The percentage of cytotoxicity was calculated with the following formula: (Percentage of cells that remained PKH26<sup>+</sup> but that had lost the proliferation dye (eFluor670<sup>-</sup>) in target cells coated with recombinant gp120 plus effectors plus Abs or sera) - (Percentage of cells that remained PKH26<sup>+</sup> but that had lost the proliferation dye (eFluor670<sup>-</sup>) in target cells plus effectors plus Abs or sera) according to the gating strategy presented in **Fig 3.1.S6**.

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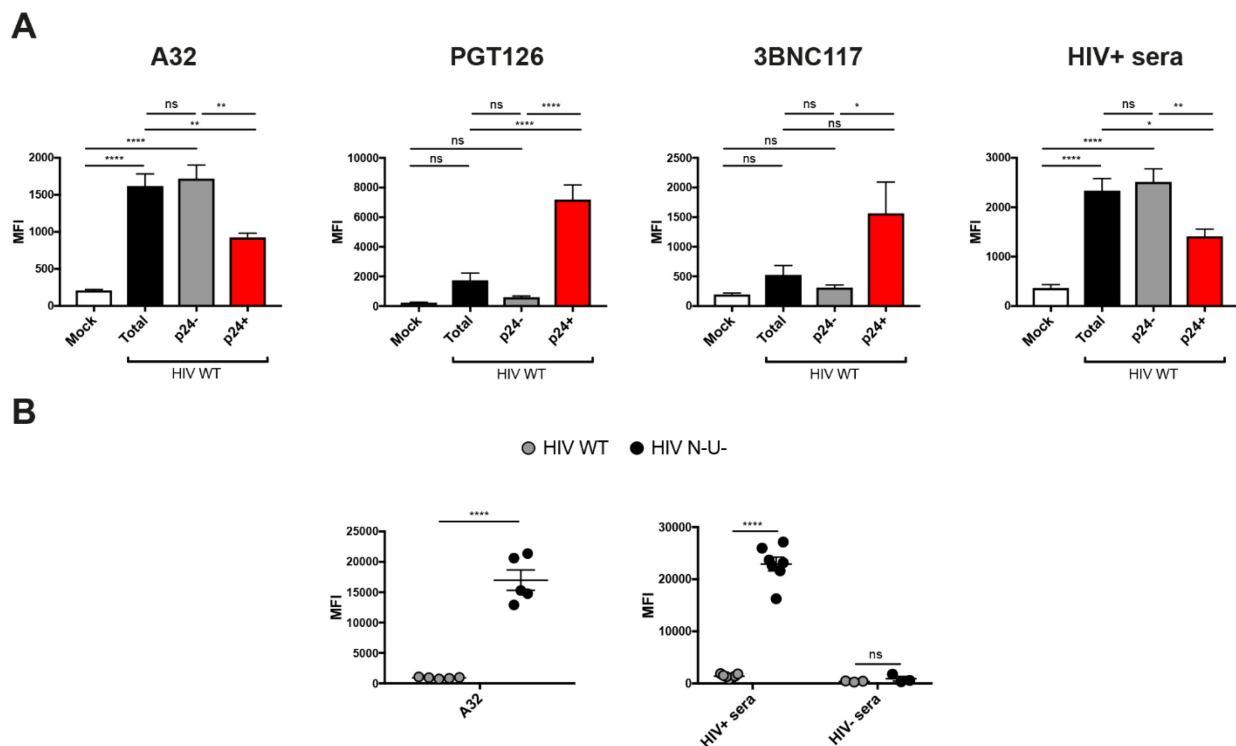
### 3.2.13 SUPPLEMENTAL FIGURES



**Figure 3.1.S1 - Level of cell-surface CD4 on infected and uninfected cells.**

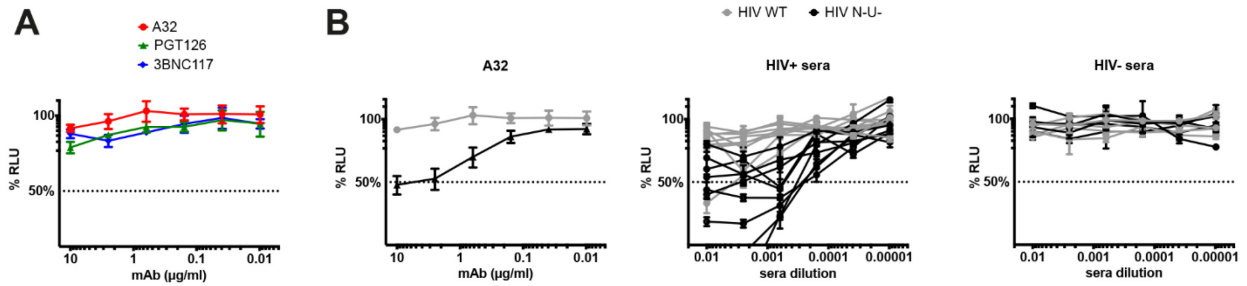
Cell-surface staining of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells mock-infected (Mock) or infected with the NL4.3 ADA GFP virus, either wild-type (HIV WT) or defective for Nef and Vpu expression (HIV N-U-) with the anti-CD4 OKT4 Ab (1 $\mu$ g/ml) (A) Dot plots depicting representative staining. (B) Mean Fluorescence Intensity (MFI) obtained for at least 5 different experiments. Error bars indicate means  $\pm$  standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested using ordinary one-way ANOVA. (\*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ , ns: nonsignificant).





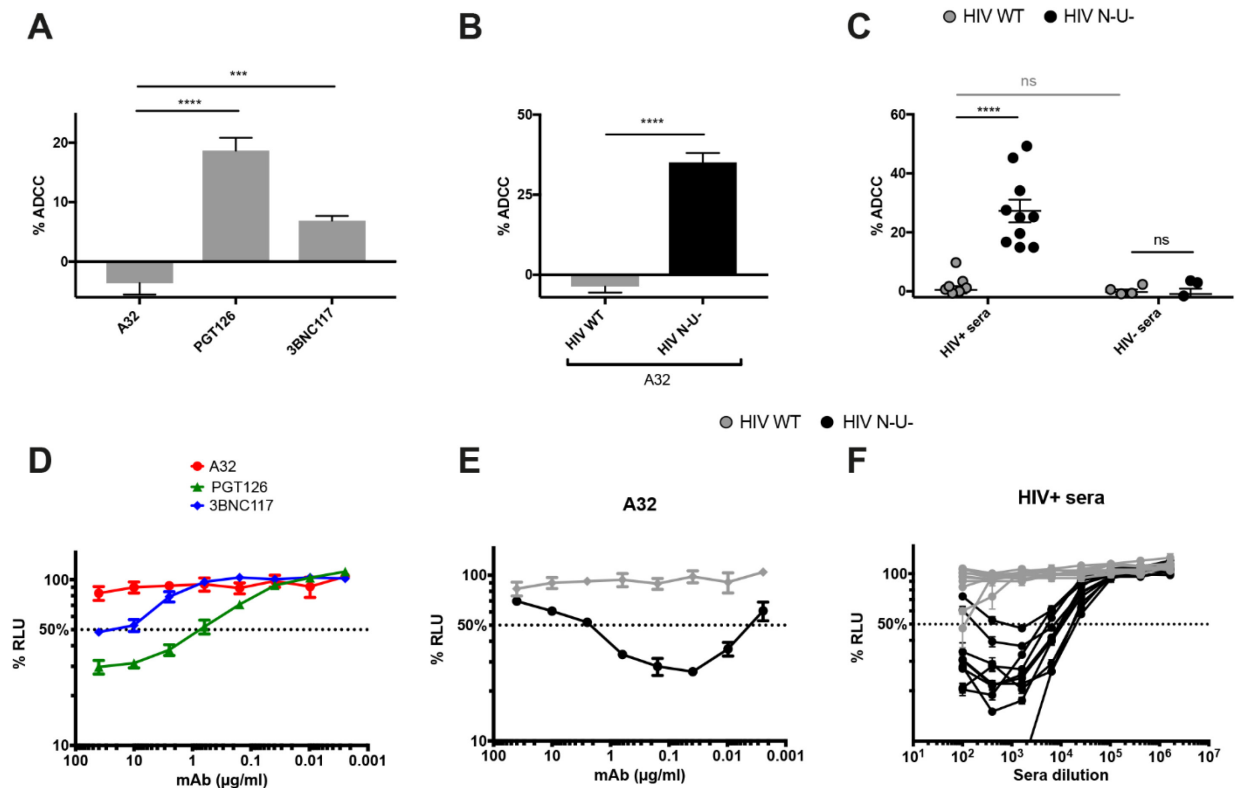
**Figure 3.1.S2 - Recognition of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with the transmitted/founder virus CH77.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were mock-infected or infected with the transmitted/founder virus CH77, either wild-type (HIV WT) or defective for Nef and Vpu expression (HIV N-U<sup>-</sup>). Forty-eight hours post-infection, cells were stained with A32, PGT126, 3BNC117 (5 µg/ml) or sera from 10 HIV-1-infected individuals (HIV<sup>+</sup> sera) or 5 uninfected individuals (HIV<sup>-</sup> sera) (1:1000 dilution), followed with appropriate secondary Abs. Shown in (A) are the mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained for at least 5 independent stains with the different Abs, with 10 HIV<sup>+</sup> or 5 HIV<sup>-</sup> sera on cells infected with WT virus. Graphs shown in (B) represent the MFI obtained for 5 independent stains with A32, with 10 HIV<sup>+</sup> sera or 5 HIV<sup>-</sup> sera on cells infected with WT and N-U<sup>-</sup> virus. Error bars indicate means ± standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested using (A) ordinary one-way ANOVA, (B) unpaired t test or Mann-Whitney test (\*, P < 0.05, (\*\*, P < 0.01, \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001, ns: non-significant).



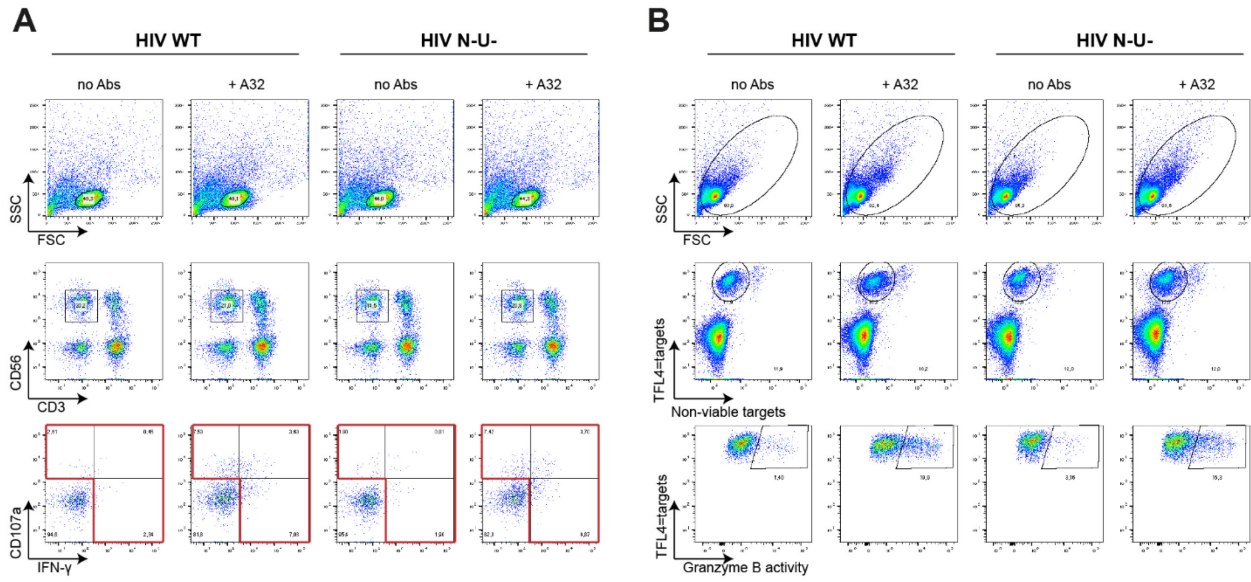
**Figure 3.1.S3 - ADCC responses detected by the Luciferase assays.**

Representation of the ADCC responses detected by the Luc assay (presented in Fig 3.1.2) as the loss of luciferase signal (RLU). **(A)** ADCC responses mediated by A32, PGT126 and 3BNC117 (0.0024, 0.0098, 0.0390, 0.1563, 0.6250, 2.5 and 10 μg/ml) against cells infected with NL4.3 ADA GFP WT. **(B)** ADCC responses mediated by A32 (0.0024, 0.0098, 0.0390, 0.1563, 0.6250, 2.5 and 10 μg/ml), HIV<sup>+</sup> or HIV<sup>-</sup> sera (1:100, 1:400, 1:1,600, 1:6,400, 1:25,600 and 1:102,400) against cells infected with NL4.3 ADA GFP WT (HIV WT) or defective for Nef and Vpu expression (HIV N-U-). Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means.



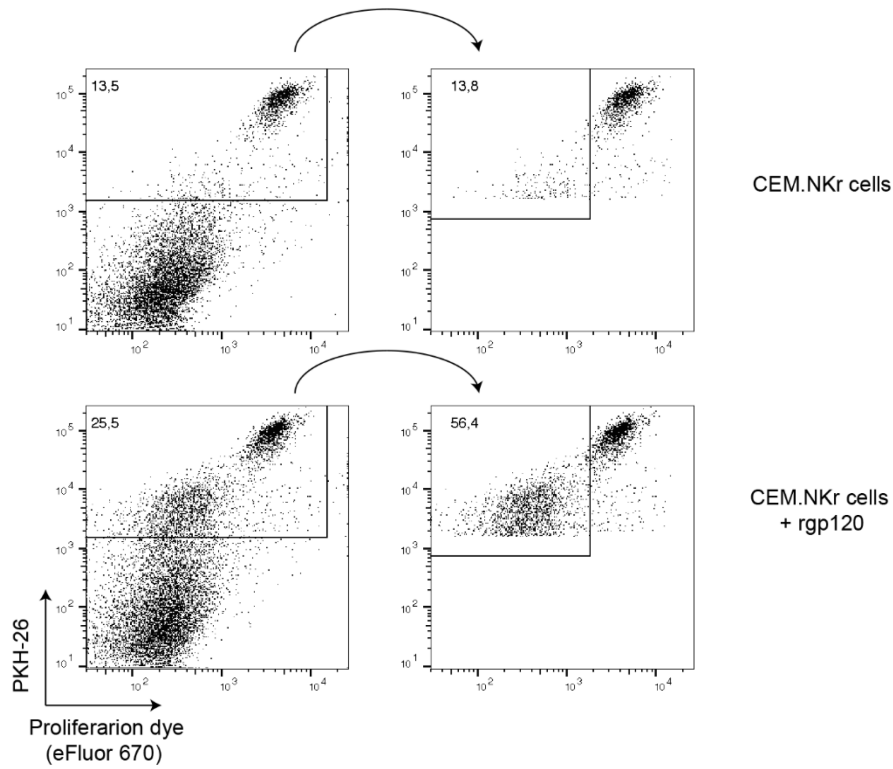
**Figure 3.1.S4 - ADCC responses detected with the FACS-based and Luciferase assays against cells infected with the transmitted/founder virus CH77.**

(A-C) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells or (D-F) CEM.NKR-CCR5-sLTR-Luc cells infected with the transmitted/founder virus CH77, either wild-type (HIV WT) (depicted in gray) or defective for Nef and Vpu expression (HIV N-U-) (depicted in black) were used as target cells with the (A-C) FACS-based infected cell elimination assay or (D-F) the Luciferase assays. Shown in (A,D) are ADCC responses mediated by A32, PGT126 and 3BNC117 against cells infected with WT virus, and in (B,C,E,F) ADCC responses mediated by (B,E) A32 or (C,F) HIV<sup>+</sup> and HIV<sup>-</sup> sera against cells infected with WT or N-U- virus. (A-C) All graphs shown represent ADCC responses obtained from at least 5 independent experiments. (D-F) ADCC responses presented as loss of luciferase signal (RLU) in triplicate. For the FACS-based assay, mAbs were used at 5  $\mu$ g/ml and human sera at a 1:1,000 dilution. For the Luciferase assay, mAbs were used at 0.0024, 0.0098, 0.0390, 0.1563, 0.6250, 2.5, 10 and 40  $\mu$ g/ml and human sera at a dilution of 1:100, 1:400, 1:1,600, 1:6,400, 1:25,600, 1:102,400, 1:409,600 and 1:1,638,400. Error bars indicate means  $\pm$  standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested using unpaired t test (\*\*\*, P < 0.001, \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001, ns: non-significant).



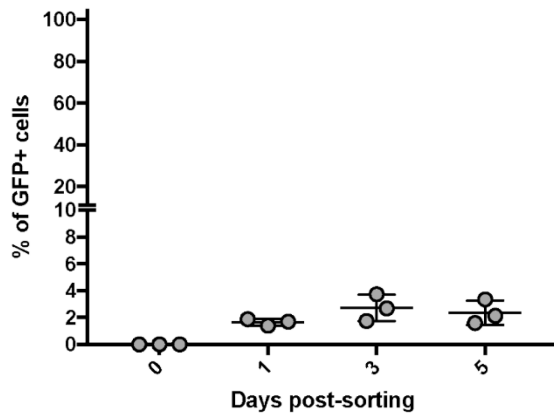
**Figure 3.1.S5 - Gating strategy used for the NK cell activation and Granzyme B assays.**

Gating strategy and dot plots depicting a representative detection of (A) NK cell activation and (B) granzyme B activity in the context of cells infected with NL4.3 ADA GFP virus, either WT (HIV WT) or defective for Nef and Vpu expression (HIV N-U<sup>-</sup>) in the presence or absence of A32.



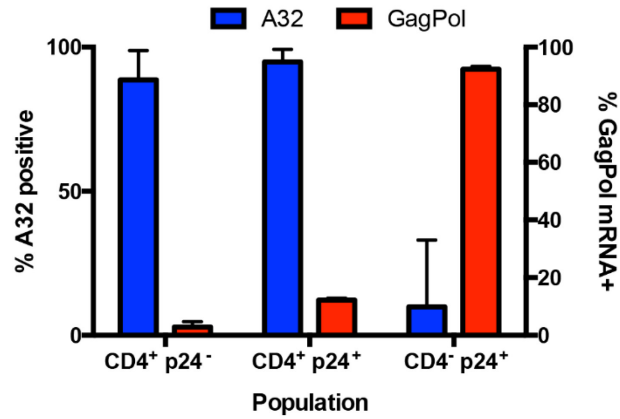
**Figure 3.1.S6 - Gating strategy used for the RFADCC assays.**

Gating strategy and dot plots depicting representative detection of responses mediated by A32 against target cells coated or not with recombinant gp120 using the RFADCC assay.



**Figure 3.1.S7 - The vast majority of uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells remain uninfected after 5 days in culture.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with the NL4.3 ADA GFP WT. Forty-eight hours post-infection, the GFP<sup>-</sup> cell population was sorted by flow cytometry and kept in culture for 5 days. The vast majority of cells (>96%) remained negative for GFP after 5 days of culture. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means for 3 independent experiments.



**Figure 3.1.S8 - Characterization of cells infected with the X4-tropic NL4.3 virus by RNA Flow FISH method.**

Quantification of the percentage of cells positive for A32 binding and *gag-pol* mRNA based on CD4 and p24 levels among primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with the X4-tropic NL4.3 WT virus. Error bars indicate means  $\pm$  standard errors of the means of at least 4 independent experiments.

## **ARTICLE 3**

**La suppression incomplète des niveaux de CD4 sur les cellules infectées affecte la conformation de l'enveloppe du VIH-1 et la réponse ADCC**



***Incomplete Downregulation of CD4 Expression Affects HIV-1 Env Conformation and  
Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity Responses***

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**Contribution des auteurs:**

Conceptualisation: **J.P.** et A.F.; Méthodologie: **J.P.** et A.F.; Recherche: **J.P.**, J.R., A.A. et J.J.; Ressources: H.M., J.C.K., C.O., et A.F.; Analyse formelle: **J.P.**; Visualisation: **J.P.**; Supervision: J.C.K., C.O., et A.F.; Obtention du financement: J.C.K., C.O., et A.F.; Rédaction - version originale: **J.P.** et A.F.; Rédaction - révision et édition: **Tous les auteurs.**

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### 3.3.1 RÉSUMÉ

Les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 exprimant à leur surface les glycoprotéines d'enveloppe (Env) dans la conformation liée à CD4 sont ciblées par la réponse cytotoxique cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCC) médiée par les anticorps induits par CD4 (CD4i) et les sérums d'individus infectés par le VIH-1 (sérums VIH<sup>+</sup>). En régulant négativement l'expression de surface de CD4, Nef empêche l'interaction Env-CD4, protégeant ainsi les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 de l'ADCC. Les clones moléculaires infectieux (IMCs) du VIH-1 sont largement utilisés pour mesurer l'ADCC. Afin de faciliter l'identification des cellules infectées et l'analyse ADCC à haut débit, des gènes rapporteurs (par exemple, le gène de la luciférase de Renilla [LucR]) sont souvent introduits dans les constructions IMC. Nous avons évalué la susceptibilité des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> infectés par le VIH-1 à la réponse ADCC en utilisant un panel d'IMCs parentaux et de dérivés qui expriment le gène rapporteur LucR, en utilisant différentes stratégies moléculaires, dont une spécifiquement conçue pour conserver l'expression de Nef. Nous avons constaté que dans certaines de ces constructions, l'expression de Nef dans les lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> était sous-optimale et que, par conséquent, la régulation négative de CD4 était incomplète. Les molécules CD4 restant à la surface des cellules entraînent l'exposition des épitopes CD4i sur Env et une augmentation importante de la sensibilité des cellules infectées à l'ADCC. On constate également que les cellules infectées avec l'IMC parental sont protégées contre la réponse ADCC puisqu'elles présentent une forte diminution des niveaux de CD4. Cette différence entre le virus parental et le virus déficient pour l'expression de Nef est indépendante de la souche d'Env exprimée, mais elle est plutôt corrélée aux niveaux d'expression de surface de CD4. Dans l'ensemble, nos résultats indiquent qu'il faut faire preuve de prudence lors de la sélection des IMCs pour mesurer la réponse ADCC et que la régulation négative du CD4 doit être prise en considération avant de tirer des conclusions sur la nature et l'ampleur de la réponse ADCC.

### 3.3.2 ABSTRACT

HIV-1-infected cells expressing envelope glycoproteins (Env) in the CD4-bound conformation on their surfaces are targeted by antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) mediated by CD4-induced (CD4i) antibodies and sera from HIV-1-infected individuals (HIV<sup>+</sup> sera). By downregulating the surface expression of CD4, Nef prevents Env-CD4 interaction, thus protecting HIV-1-infected cells from ADCC. HIV-1 infectious molecular clones (IMCs) are

widely used to measure ADCC. In order to facilitate the identification of infected cells and high-throughput ADCC analysis, reporter genes (e.g., the Renilla luciferase [LucR] gene) are often introduced into IMC constructs. We evaluated the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected CD4 T lymphocytes to ADCC using a panel of parental IMCs and derivatives that expressed the LucR reporter gene, utilizing different molecular strategies, including one specifically designed to retain Nef expression. We found that in some of these constructs, Nef expression in CD4 T cells was suboptimal, and consequently, CD4 downregulation was incomplete. CD4 molecules remaining on the cell surface resulted in the exposure of ADCC-mediating CD4i epitopes on Env and a dramatic increase in the susceptibility of the infected cells to ADCC. Strikingly, protection from ADCC was observed when cells were infected with the parental IMC, which exhibited strong CD4 downregulation. This discrepancy between the parental and Nef-impaired viruses was independent of the strains of Env expressed, but rather, it was correlated with the levels of CD4 surface expression. Overall, our results indicate that caution should be taken when selecting IMCs for ADCC measurements and that CD4 downregulation needs to be carefully monitored when drawing conclusions about the nature and magnitude of ADCC

### **3.3.3 IMPORTANCE**

In-depth understanding of the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC might help establish correlates of vaccine protection and guide the development of HIV-1 vaccine strategies. Different ADCC assays have been developed, including those using infectious molecular clones (IMCs) carrying a LucR reporter gene that greatly facilitates large-scale quantitative analysis. We previously reported different molecular strategies for introducing LucR while maintaining Nef expression and function and, consequently, CD4 surface downregulation. Here, we demonstrate that utilizing IMCs that exhibit impaired Nef expression can have undesirable consequences due to incomplete CD4 downregulation. CD4 molecules remaining on the cell surface resulted in the exposure of ADCC-mediating CD4i epitopes on Env and a dramatic increase in the susceptibility of the infected cells to ADCC. Overall, our results indicate that CD4 downregulation needs to be carefully monitored when drawing conclusions about the nature and magnitude of ADCC.

### 3.3.4 INTRODUCTION

Recent efforts aimed at understanding antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) against HIV-1-infected cells uncovered several strategies put in place by the virus to limit exposure of vulnerable CD4-induced (CD4i) epitopes. Interaction of Env with the CD4 receptor was reported to be critical for exposing epitopes recognized by ADCC-mediating antibodies (Abs) ([1–3](#)). HIV-1 achieves protection from ADCC by limiting Env-CD4 interaction by downregulating CD4 and preventing Env accumulation at the surface of infected cells ([1, 3–7](#)). Two accessory proteins, Nef and Vpu, impact ADCC sensitivity via reduction of cell surface expression of CD4 ([1, 3](#)), while Env accumulation is tightly controlled through efficient internalization ([6](#)) and Vpu-mediated BST-2 downregulation ([4, 5, 7](#)). Therefore, these accessory proteins protect HIV-1-infected cells from ADCC mediated by CD4i non-neutralizing Abs (nnAbs). Thus, cells infected with primary viruses coding for functional Nef and Vpu proteins are largely resistant to ADCC induced by these nnAbs ([3, 7–13](#)). These findings are in agreement with structural information indicating that ADCC-mediating nnAbs target a highly conserved region in the gp120 inner domain that is buried inside the untriggered Env trimer and becomes exposed only upon CD4 engagement ([2, 3, 8, 14–17](#)). Thus, it is to be expected that in the presence of functional Vpu and Nef, HIV-1-infected cells will be largely refractory to CD4i nnAb-mediated ADCC. Several studies, however, have reported ADCC activity by such antibodies against HIV-1-infected cells ([18–33](#)), suggesting the CD4i epitopes were accessible. Since all of these studies used HIV-1 infectious molecular clones (IMCs) carrying the Renilla luciferase (LucR) reporter gene for sensitive quantification of infection and infection inhibition, we wondered whether the molecular design of the LucR reporter IMC might have impaired Nef functions that impacted the conformation sampled by Env at the surface of infected cells. Of note, the original reporter IMC strategy encompassed an isogenic proviral backbone from which heterologous env strains could be expressed in cis and encoding LucR in frame with a T2A “ribosome-skipping” peptide intended to drive Nef expression (referred to as Env-IMC-LucR.T2A) ([34](#)). Supporting the possibility of Env conformation being impacted, we previously reported that the strategy used to create LucR reporter IMCs can affect Nef expression on CD4 T cells ([35](#)), which in turn may affect the Env conformation due to incomplete CD4 downregulation ([1, 3, 13, 36](#)). Of note, we found that a revised molecular strategy utilizing a modified encephalomyocarditis virus (EMCV) internal ribosome entry site (IRES) element in lieu of T2A (Env-IMC-LucR.6ATRi) can normalize Nef

expression and function compared to the Env-IMC-LucR.T2A molecular strategy (35, 37). In order to test this possibility, we evaluated the CD4i nnAb binding and ADCC susceptibility of primary CD4 T cells infected with panels of parental IMCs and LucR-reporter IMC derivatives in which different strategies to drive Nef expression were applied. Cells infected with certain LucR viruses that exhibited physiological levels of Nef expression downregulated surface CD4 efficiently, though not always completely. Consequently, their levels of CD4i nnAb binding were similar to that of cells infected with the parental viruses, as were their levels of protection against ADCC by CD4i antibodies. However, importantly, we found that in some IMC-LucR constructs, Nef expression in CD4 T cells was suboptimal, and consequently, CD4 downregulation from the cell surface was less efficient. This allowed Env-CD4 engagement and the exposure of CD4i epitopes otherwise occluded on cells infected with parental IMCs. Consequently, while cells infected with parental IMCs presented robust CD4 downregulation and were protected from ADCC mediated by the antibody A32 and HIV+ sera, cells infected with the LucR reporter IMCs that displayed impaired Nef expression (i.e., encoding LucR.T2A) were highly susceptible to ADCC mediated by these ligands.

### 3.3.5 RESULTS

#### **Molecular strategies for Nef expression in reporter HIV-1 affect CD4 downregulation.**

HIV-1 IMCs carrying panels of heterologous HIV-1 env sequences (Env-IMCs) in an isogenic backbone and expressing the Renilla luciferase (LucR) reporter, which allows highly sensitive, quantitative readout of productive infection (34), have been widely used to evaluate the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC mediated by vaccine-elicited antibodies and several CD4i nnAbs (18–33). However, we previously reported that some of these LucR reporter IMCs, particularly those utilizing a ribosome-skipping T2A peptide strategy to link Renilla luciferase with Nef (Env-IMC-LucR.T2A), were unable to fully downregulate CD4 due to impaired Nef expression in CD4 T cells (35). In a modified molecular approach, we introduced a bicistronic LucR.IRES-nef cassette in lieu of LucR.T2A-nef by utilizing the EMCV-modified 6ATR IRES element (6ATRi) to drive nef expression (Env-IMC-LucR.6ATRi) and showed that it can normalize Nef expression and function compared to the T2A molecular strategy (35, 37). **Figure 3.2.1** schematically illustrates these molecular approaches. In this study, we aimed to

elucidate whether different strategies to drive Nef expression affect the sensitivity of reporter HIV-1 IMCs to ADCC compared to their parental non-reporter IMCs. To this end, we first compared the abilities of a panel of IMCs (described in Materials and Methods) to downregulate CD4. In addition to previously reported replication-competent Env-IMC and Env-IMC-LucR.T2A viruses, we included an expanded panel of Env-IMC-LucR.6ATRi viruses carrying further transmitted/founder (T/F) and reference env strains, as well as novel full-length T/F IMCs into which the LucR.6ATRi cassette was inserted. In order to evaluate the abilities of the different parental and LucR IMCs to downregulate CD4 from the cell surface, primary CD4 T cells from HIV-1-uninfected individuals were infected as described in Materials and Methods and 48 h later incubated with the anti-CD4 antibody OKT4. The infected cells were identified by intracellular p24 staining and analyzed by flow cytometry as indicated in Materials and Methods. To help visualize the impact that the LucR.T2A cloning strategy had on CD4 downregulation, representative flow cytometry dot plots are provided in **Fig. 3.2.2A**. Cells infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) with the parental CH058.c T/F virus exhibited robust CD4 downregulation (**Fig. 3.2.2A**, left). This was recapitulated with a pNL4.3-based Env-IMC expressing the CH058 Env (**Fig. 3.2.2A**, center). However, in the strain-matched Env-IMC-LucR.T2A virus (NL-LucR.T2A-B.CH058.ecto), CD4 downregulation was dramatically reduced (**Fig. 3.2.2A and B**). This finding was consistent with what we previously described for the BaL env-bearing counterpart, NL-LucR.T2A-BaL.ecto, and matched the Nef-minus control (**Fig. 3.2.2C**) ([35](#)). The same impairment of CD4 downregulation compared to parental Env-IMC was observed with additional Env-IMC-LucR.T2A viruses expressing different T/F and reference strain Envs (CH040, YU2, SF162, and BaL), indicating that the observed effect was independent of the Env being expressed (**Fig. 3.2.2C**). Notably, the T2A strategy to drive Nef expression also adversely affected CD4 downregulation when LucR.T2A was introduced into the parental CH077.t T/F IMC (**Fig. 3.2.2C**), indicating that the lack of functional Nef expression and CD4 downregulation is not exclusive to the laboratory-adapted pNL4.3 backbone. Interestingly, introduction of the LucR.6ATRi element into two T/F IMCs (CH077.t and CH0505s) or several Env-IMC proviruses allowed downregulation of CD4 to physiological levels, similar to their parental counterparts, but not always as efficiently (**Fig. 3.2.2C**, compare CH040, CH077, and CH505). As expected, and in agreement with our previous publication ([35](#)), impaired CD4 downregulation was strongly correlated with deficient Nef expression in T cells

(**Fig. 3.2.2D and E**) and with deficient Nef-mediated major histocompatibility complex class I (MHC-I) downregulation (not shown).

### **CD4 downregulation affects Env conformation and ADCC responses.**

We previously established that inefficient CD4 downregulation results in Env-CD4 interaction that causes exposure of Env CD4i epitopes on the surfaces of infected cells ([1](#), [3](#), [13](#)). Nevertheless, Nef-impaired Env-IMC-LucR.T2A viruses have been used to assess CD4i nnAb-mediated ADCC *in vitro*, while Env strain-matched reporter viruses utilizing the 6ATRi element to drive Nef expression had not yet been investigated for ADCC assays. We therefore investigated whether the impaired CD4 downregulation observed for some LucR reporter IMCs (**Fig. 3.2.2A to C**) was sufficient to alter Env conformation. Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with the same panels of viruses described above. Exposure of CD4i epitopes was monitored with the nnAb antibody, A32, which recognizes an anti-cluster A epitope normally occluded in the untriggered trimer ([2](#), [3](#), [8](#), [14–17](#)), as well as with sera from HIV-1-infected individuals (HIV<sup>+</sup> sera). Dramatic differences in Env recognition by A32 (**Fig. 3.2.3A to C**) and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 3.2.3E to G**) were observed among the different panels of IMCs expressing the same Env. For example, cells infected with the wild-type CH058.c T/F IMC or its cognate non-reporter Env-IMC were poorly recognized by these ligands (**Fig. 3.2.3A and E**), but when the same Env was expressed in the context of the Env-IMC-LucR.T2A backbone, Env was much more readily recognized by the ligands (mean fluorescence intensities [MFI] were 3- to 5-fold higher) (**Fig. 3.2.3B and F**). Varying degrees of significant increases in Ab binding were also seen for the other T2A-encoding IMCs compared to their Env strain-matched parental viruses and were consistent with the extent of Nef-deficient virus (**Fig. 3.2.3C and G**, panel of BaL Env-expressing IMCs). With regard to Ab binding, LucR.6ATRi-containing reporter IMCs closely resembled parental viruses (**Fig. 3.2.3C and G**). Accordingly, highly significant correlations ( $P < 0.0001$ ) were established between the amounts of CD4 detected on the cell surface and Env recognition by A32 (**Fig. 3.2.3D**) and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 3.2.3H**). Importantly, increased Env recognition translated into higher susceptibility to ADCC (**Fig. 3.2.4**). Cells infected with the parental IMC were completely (encoding T/F Env strains) or largely (encoding chronic and laboratory-adapted strains, YU-2, SF162, and BaL) resistant to ADCC mediated by these ligands, and LucR.6ATRi-encoding reporter counterparts displayed similar or slightly higher ADCC than the respective parental strain. In contrast, cells infected with

viruses unable to efficiently downregulate CD4 were highly susceptible. Again, strong ( $r = 0.76$ ) and highly significant ( $P < 0.0001$ ) correlations were established between cell surface CD4 levels and ADCC mediated by A32 (**Fig. 3.2.4B**) and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 3.2.4D**). These results strongly advocate for careful characterization of the CD4 downregulation properties of any HIV-1 IMC, including reporter viruses, chosen and intended to measure ADCC, as any IMC with impaired Nef (or Vpu) function may have dramatic effects on Env conformation and thus introduce significant bias toward non-neutralizing CD4i Abs.

### **Impaired downregulation of NKG2D ligands modulates ADCC responses.**

While antibody recognition of target cells is absolutely required for ADCC responses, additional interactions between target and effector cells have been shown to be necessary to activate effector cells, including NK cells. For example, NK cell effector functions are modulated by a balance between signals delivered through inhibitory (e.g., KIR and CD94/NKG2A), activating (e.g., CD16, NKG2D, DNAM-1, and NKp46), or coactivating (e.g., NTB-A and 2B4) receptors that either suppress or enhance NK cell activity (38). It has been shown that Nef decreases the expression of NKG2D ligands (MICA, ULBP1, and ULBP2) (39, 40), thus preventing their interaction with the NK cell-activating NKG2D receptor. Since the NKG2D receptor is known to modulate ADCC responses against HIV-1-infected cells (36, 41), we evaluated the capacities of IMCs expressing T/F Envs CH058, CH040, and CH077 to downregulate NKG2D ligands. To evaluate this, primary CD4 T cells were isolated from non-HIV-infected individuals and infected with these IMCs as described above. The cultures were then stained with a recombinant human NKG2D-Fc chimera that recognizes several NKG2D ligands (41–44) or with a matched isotype control. Infected cells within these cultures were identified by intracellular p24 staining. As previously reported (45), HIV-1 infection enhanced NKG2D-Fc detection compared to mock-infected cells (**Fig. 3.2.5A**). This enhancement, however, was significantly greater when cells were infected with IMCs comprising the LucR.T2A element and was correlated with CD4 levels present at the cell surface (**Fig. 3.2.5B**). We next addressed whether the increased expression of NKG2D ligands enhanced susceptibility to ADCC mediated by A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. As previously reported (1, 3, 8, 13, 36) and shown in **Fig. 3.2.4**, cells infected with the parental viruses were not sensitive to ADCC mediated by A32 (**Fig. 3.2.5C**) or antibodies within HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 3.2.5D**), using autologous peripheral blood mononuclear cells



(PBMCs) as effector cells. Supporting Nef's role in evading ADCC ([1](#), [3](#), [8](#), [13](#), [36](#), [41](#)), cells infected by IMCs with impaired Nef expression (i.e., LucR.T2A viruses) were more susceptible to ADCC mediated by either A32 (**Fig. 3.2.5C**) or HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 3.2.5D**). In agreement with a role for NKG2D ligands in ADCC responses against HIV-1-infected cells ([36](#), [41](#)), addition of a blocking anti-NKG2D antibody, but not an isotype control, significantly decreased the susceptibility of Env-IMC LucR.T2A-infected cells to ADCC mediated by A32 and antibodies contained within HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 3.2.5C and D**). Altogether, these results indicate that, in addition to the exposure of ADCC-mediating epitopes induced by the presence of CD4 at the cell surface, the accumulation of NKG2D-activating ligands promotes NK cell cytotoxicity for cells infected with IMCs unable to express physiological levels of Nef.

### 3.3.6 DISCUSSION

While ADCC responses against HIV-1 have been associated with protection against HIV-1 transmission and disease progression ([23](#), [46–51](#)), there are conflicting reports regarding the ability of non-neutralizing CD4i Abs to mediate ADCC. Consistent with the occluded nature of the epitopes recognized by these Abs, several groups have shown that cells infected with full-length HIV-1 are resistant to ADCC mediated by the Abs ([3](#), [8–13](#)). However, CD4i Abs have also been reported to mediate potent ADCC ([18–23](#), [52–59](#)). Part of this conundrum was recently explained by performing a side-by-side comparison of the different assays used to measure ADCC responses ([60](#)). It was shown that assays that do not differentiate virus-infected from uninfected cells (granzyme B and NK cell activation) or that rely on gp120-coated cells (rapid fluorometric antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity [RFADCC] assay) overestimate ADCC responses mediated by antibodies to CD4i epitopes. These assays are severely biased in favor of CD4i antibodies as a consequence of the coating of uninfected bystander cells by shed gp120 ([10](#), [60](#)). However, this did not explain why additional studies found strong ADCC of these Abs when measuring their activities against cells infected with full-length IMC LucR.T2A viruses ([18–33](#)), in which the readout was sensitive detection of a provirally encoded LucR reporter gene (i.e., avoiding measurement of bystander killing) and a molecular strategy utilizing a T2A ribosome-skipping peptide intended to provide Nef expression. Since increasing evidence supports a role of Env conformation in the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC ([61–64](#)), we explored the possibility that Env conformation at the surface of cells infected with these reporter viruses might

differ from those of the parental viruses due to altered interactions with CD4. We first evaluated the abilities of these viruses to downregulate the CD4 receptor in comparison with their parental IMCs. In agreement with our previous report (35), we found that the presence of the T2A peptide did not, as intended, support Nef expression in primary T cells, and consequently, CD4 downregulation was impaired. The remaining levels of CD4 at the surface of cells infected with these LucR.T2A reporter IMCs were sufficient to expose CD4i epitopes on Env, permitting recognition by A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. An alternative molecular strategy to achieve LucR, as well as Nef, expression (6ATRi) largely, but not fully, resolved these deficiencies. In marked contrast to Nef-deficient viruses, cells infected with the parental IMCs (e.g., T/F IMC, CH058.c, CH040.c, CH077.t, and CH0505s) exhibited robust CD4 downregulation and thus did not expose the epitopes. Accordingly, cells infected with the parental viruses were resistant to ADCC mediated by these ligands (**Fig. 3.2.4 and 3.2.5**). In addition, we observed that IMCs with impaired Nef expression were unable to fully downregulate NKG2D ligands, thus contributing to the enhanced susceptibility of these cells to CD4i antibody-mediated ADCC responses (**Fig. 3.2.5**). For example, cells infected with CH058 Env-IMC were more susceptible to ADCC mediated by A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera than those infected with the parental virus (**Fig. 3.2.4 and 3.2.5**). This could be at least partially explained by the presence of higher levels of NKG2D ligands at the surfaces of CH058 Env-IMC-infected cells (**Fig. 3.2.5A**). Interestingly, we also found that some Env-IMCs, including CH058, failed to downregulate the restriction factor BST-2 to the same extent as the parental virus, resulting in increased Env levels at the cell surface (**Fig. 3.2.6**) and explaining the better recognition of these infected cells by A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 3.2.3B and F**). Therefore, our results strongly advocate for carefully controlling for Nef expression and function, as well as BST-2 downregulation and Env expression, when selecting IMCs to measure ADCC.

The establishment of a large panel of viruses has proven extremely useful to standardize neutralization assessments of anti-Env antibodies and to evaluate their breadth and potency (65–67). Similar efforts are being considered for evaluating the breadth of ADCC responses against HIV-1-infected cells (68). One attractive strategy might be to generate large panels of reporter IMCs expressing Envs from circulating strains, which offers the advantage of highly sensitive, quantitative, and rapid assay readout, which avoids inadvertent measurement of bystander killing. The fact that this strategy worked well for neutralization assays (69–71) does not, however,

guarantee that it will be the same for ADCC without undertaking further extensive optimization for ADCC assay-specific criteria. We believe that assays to measure Ab and effector cell interactions with infected cells are significantly more complex than those assessing Ab neutralization of viral particles because, in addition to Env expression and conformation, additional players, such as NKG2D ligands, can affect the readout of the assay. Therefore, our results strongly suggest that additional efforts should be devoted to identify and optimize reporter IMC strategies that ensure wildtype-like Nef expression and function before developing them into Env strain panels. We found LucR reporter IMCs encoding the modified EMCV IRES 6ATRi element expressed levels of Nef, and mediated CD4 downregulation, similarly to the cognate parental viruses. Consequently, Env conformation was less affected than with LucR IMCs utilizing the T2A peptide approach. Nevertheless, small but significant differences remained and varied depending on the 6ATRi-containing IMC that was used. For example, when 6ATRi was introduced in the pNL4.3 backbone coding for BaL Env, ADCC responses were similar to those obtained for the non-reporter pNL4.3. However, in the context of IMCs coding for CH040, CH077, and CH505 Envs, ADCC susceptibility was significantly higher than for their parental counterparts (**Fig. 3.2.4**). While small differences in CD4 and NKG2D ligand downregulation might partially explain these differences, additional parameters, including Env expression and Vpr-mediated upregulation of NKG2D ligands ([45](#)), could also affect ADCC responses and should be carefully evaluated. Our results highlight just some of the important elements of the intrinsic complexity in the interplay between Env and accessory proteins in modulating the susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC. A better comprehension of the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC might help us better understand the correlates of vaccine protection and guide the development of HIV eradication strategies. Our results strongly advocate for carefully measuring parameters that may affect Env conformation and accessory protein function when measuring anti-HIV ADCC responses.

### 3.3.7 MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### **Ethics statement**

Written informed consent was obtained from all study participants (the Montreal Primary HIV Infection Cohort [72, 73] and the Canadian Cohort of HIV Infected Slow Progressors [74–76]), and the research adhered to the ethical guidelines of Centre de Recherche du CHUM (CRCHUM) and was reviewed and approved by the CRCHUM Institutional Review Board (ethics committee approval number CE 16.164 -CA). The research adhered to the standards indicated by the Declaration of Helsinki. All the participants were adults and provided written informed consent prior to enrollment, in accordance with Institutional Review Board approval.

#### **Cell lines and isolation of primary cells**

HEK293T human embryonic kidney cells (obtained from the ATCC) were grown as previously described (3, 9). TZM-bl cells were cultured as we described previously (77). Primary human PBMCs and CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were isolated, activated, and cultured as previously described (3, 9). Briefly, PBMCs were obtained by leukapheresis, and CD4<sup>+</sup> T lymphocytes were purified from resting PBMCs by negative selection using immunomagnetic beads (StemCell Technologies, Vancouver, BC, Canada) according to the manufacturer's instructions and were activated with phytohemagglutinin-L (10 µg/ml) for 48 h and then maintained in RPMI 1640 complete medium supplemented with recombinant interleukin 2 (rIL-2) (100 U/ml).

#### **Proviral constructs**

We previously reported the generation of proviral plasmids of IMCs of T/F clade B HIV-1 strains pCH040.c, pCH058.c, and pCH077.t (accession numbers JN944939, JN944940, and JN944941) (78), and that of the brain-derived HIV-1 strain YU-2 (79), in which vpu was corrected to yield pYU-2c, and the clade C T/F IMC pCH0505.s (80) was also previously described. Proviral constructs, referred to collectively as Env-IMCs, comprising an HIV-1 NL4.3 (M19921.2)-based isogenic backbone engineered for the insertion of heterologous env strain sequences and expression in cis of full-length Env, were previously described (34). The proviral plasmids of replication-competent Env-IMCs utilized in this study are those encoding the Env ectodomain of T/F strains (pNL-B.CH040.ecto, pNL-B.CH058.ecto, pNL-CH077.ecto, and pNL-

C.CH0505s.ecto) and reference strains (pNL-B.YU-2.ecto, pNL-B.SF162.ecto, and pNL-B.BaL.ecto). In the same study, we reported the construction of env strain-matched, replication-competent reporter virus derivatives of Env-IMCs that encode Renilla luciferase (LucR) followed in frame by a ribosome-skipping T2A peptide intended to drive Nef expression, collectively referred to as Env-IMCLucR.T2A viruses (34). The proviral plasmids utilized here were pNL-LucR.T2A-B.CH040.ecto, pNL-LucR.T2AB.CH058.ecto, pNL-LucR.T2A-CH077.ecto, pNL-LucR.T2A-B.YU-2.ecto, pNL-LucR.T2A-B.SF162.ecto, pNL-LucR.T2AB.BaL.ecto, and pNL-LucR.T2A-B.Bal.ecto-Nefstop (34). In a modified molecular approach, we replaced the bicistronic LucR.T2A-nef fragment with a bicistronic LucR.IRES-nef cassettes utilizing the EMCV-modified 6ATR IRES element (6ATRI) to drive nef expression, resulting in Env-IMC-LucR.6ATRI viruses (35). The LucR reporter virus derivatives of CH077.t and CH0505.s T/F IMCs included in this study were constructed similarly to IMC-LucR.T2A (CH077.t-LucRT2A [81]) or IMC-LucR.6ATRI (CH077.t-LucR.6ATRI and CH0505.s-LucR.6ATRI [data not shown]). Of note, while the parental IMCs code for parental Nef proteins, Env-IMC, Env-IMC-LucR.T2A, and Env-IMC-LucR.6ATRI code for the pNL4.3 Nef protein.

### **Virus production and infections**

To achieve similar levels of infection among the different IMCs tested, vesicular stomatitis virus G (VSVG)-pseudotyped HIV-1 isolates were produced and titrated as previously described (1). The viruses were then used to infect activated primary CD4 T cells from healthy HIV-1-negative donors by spin infection at  $800 \times g$  for 1 h in 96-well plates at 25°C. The percentages of infected cells, as evaluated by intracellular p24 staining, were below 15% for all the viruses tested and typically reached 10%.

### **Antibodies and sera**

The following Abs were used as primary Abs for cell surface staining: mouse anti-CD4 mAb OKT4 (recognizing the D3 domain of CD4; BioLegend); rabbit anti-BST-2 Ab (sc-99191; Santa Cruz); allophycocyanin (APC)-conjugated mouse anti-MHC-I (clone G46-2.6, recognizing a monomorphic epitope on HLA-A, HLA-B, and HLA-C; BD Biosciences); anti-HIV-1 Env 2G12, 10e8, and A32 mAbs (NIH AIDS Reagent Program); and NKG2D-IgG Fc fusion protein (recognizing NKG2D ligands MICA, MICB, and ULBPs; R&D Systems) or its matched IgG Fc

fusion protein (R&D Systems) as a control. Goat anti-mouse and anti-human antibodies precoupled to Alexa Fluor 647 (Invitrogen) were used as secondary antibodies in flow cytometry experiments. Sera from chronically HIV-infected donors were collected, heat inactivated, and conserved as previously described (3, 9). A random number generator (QuickCalcs; GraphPad, San Diego, CA, USA) was used to randomly select a number of sera for each experiment. Antibodies for Western blotting are described below.

### **Flow cytometry analysis**

Cell surface staining was performed as previously described (1, 9). Binding of cell surface CD4 (OKT4; 1 µg/ml), MHC-I (clone G46-2.6), and NKG2DL by NKG2D-Fc chimera protein (5 µg/ml) and HIV-1 Env by sera (1:1,000 dilution) or anti-Env mAb A32 (5 µg/ml) was performed at 48 h post-infection. Infected cells were identified by intracellular staining of HIV-1 p24 using a Cytotfix/ Cytoperm fixation/permeabilization kit (BD Biosciences, Mississauga, ON, Canada) and a fluorescent anti-p24 mAb (phycoerythrin [PE]-conjugated anti-p24, clone KC57; Beckman Coulter/Immunotech). The percentage of infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup>) was determined by gating the live-cell population on the basis of viability dye staining (Aqua Vivid; Thermo Fisher Scientific). Samples were acquired on an LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences), and data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star, Ashland, OR, USA).

### **FACS-based ADCC assay**

Measurement of ADCC using a fluorescence-activated cell sorting (FACS)- based assay was performed at 48 h post-infection (hpi) as previously described (3, 9, 82). Briefly, infected primary CD4 T cells were stained with AquaVivid viability dye and cell proliferation dye (eFluor670; eBioscience) and used as target cells. Autologous effector PBMCs, stained with another cellular marker (cell proliferation dye eFluor450; eBioscience), were added at an effector/target ratio of 10:1 in 96-well V-bottom plates (Corning, Corning, NY). A 1:1,000 final dilution of sera or 5 µg/ml of ADCC-mediating mAb was added to appropriate wells, and the cells were incubated for 15 min at room temperature. The plates were subsequently centrifuged for 1 min at 300 × g and incubated at 37°C and 5% CO<sub>2</sub> for 5 to 6 h before being fixed in a 2% phosphate-buffered saline (PBS)-formaldehyde solution. Alternatively, effector cells were preincubated in the presence of purified anti-human CD314 (NKG2D; R&D Systems) or its matched IgG isotype

control (10 µg/ml) prior being incubated with target cells for NKG2D blockade experiments. Samples were acquired on an LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences), and data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star). The percentage of ADCC was calculated with the following formula: (percent p24<sup>+</sup> cells in targets plus effectors) × (percent p24<sup>+</sup> cells in targets plus effectors plus Abs) / (percent p24<sup>+</sup> cells in targets) by gating on infected live target cells.

### **Western blotting**

CD8-depleted, CD3/CD28 Dynabeads (Gibco, Life Technologies)-activated CD4 T cells from 4 healthy non-HIV-infected donors were pooled and infected as described above (with VSV-G-pseudotyped virions). The percentage and total number of infected CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were determined at 72 hpi via intracellular p24 staining and flow cytometric analysis (essentially as described above). Aliquots of the cells were lysed with Laemmli sample buffer at a final concentration of  $0.5 \times 10^4$  infected cells/µl of lysate. Equal amounts (either 10 µl or 20 µl) of lysate from each sample were loaded in parallel for p24 and Nef detection. The procedures for sample sonication, denaturing SDS-PAGE, and Western blotting were essentially as we described previously (35). Here, we used the following primary antibodies: polyclonal rabbit HIV-1 Nef antiserum (obtained from the NIH AIDS Reagent Program, Division of AIDS, NIAID, NIH; contributed by Ronald Swanstrom; catalog no. 2949; lot 10-070932) at 1:1,000 dilution to visualize Nef protein and mouse mAb to HIV-1 p24 (Gag), prepared from the HIV-1 p24 hybridoma (clone 183-H12-5C; obtained from the NIH AIDS Reagent Program, Division of AIDS, NIAID, NIH; contributed by Bruce Chesebro and Hardy Chen; catalog no. 1513) (83) and used at 1:1,000 dilution to probe for p24/Gag.

### **Statistical analyses**

Statistics were analyzed using GraphPad Prism version 6.0.1 (GraphPad, San Diego, CA, USA). Every data set was tested for statistical normality, and the information was used to apply the appropriate (parametric or nonparametric) statistical test. P values of < 0.05 were considered significant; significance values are indicated as \*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01, \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001.

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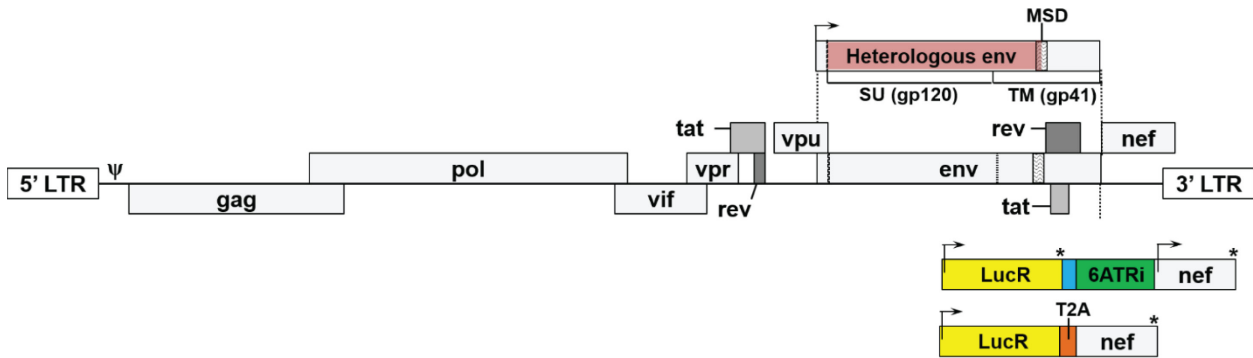
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### 3.3.10 FIGURES



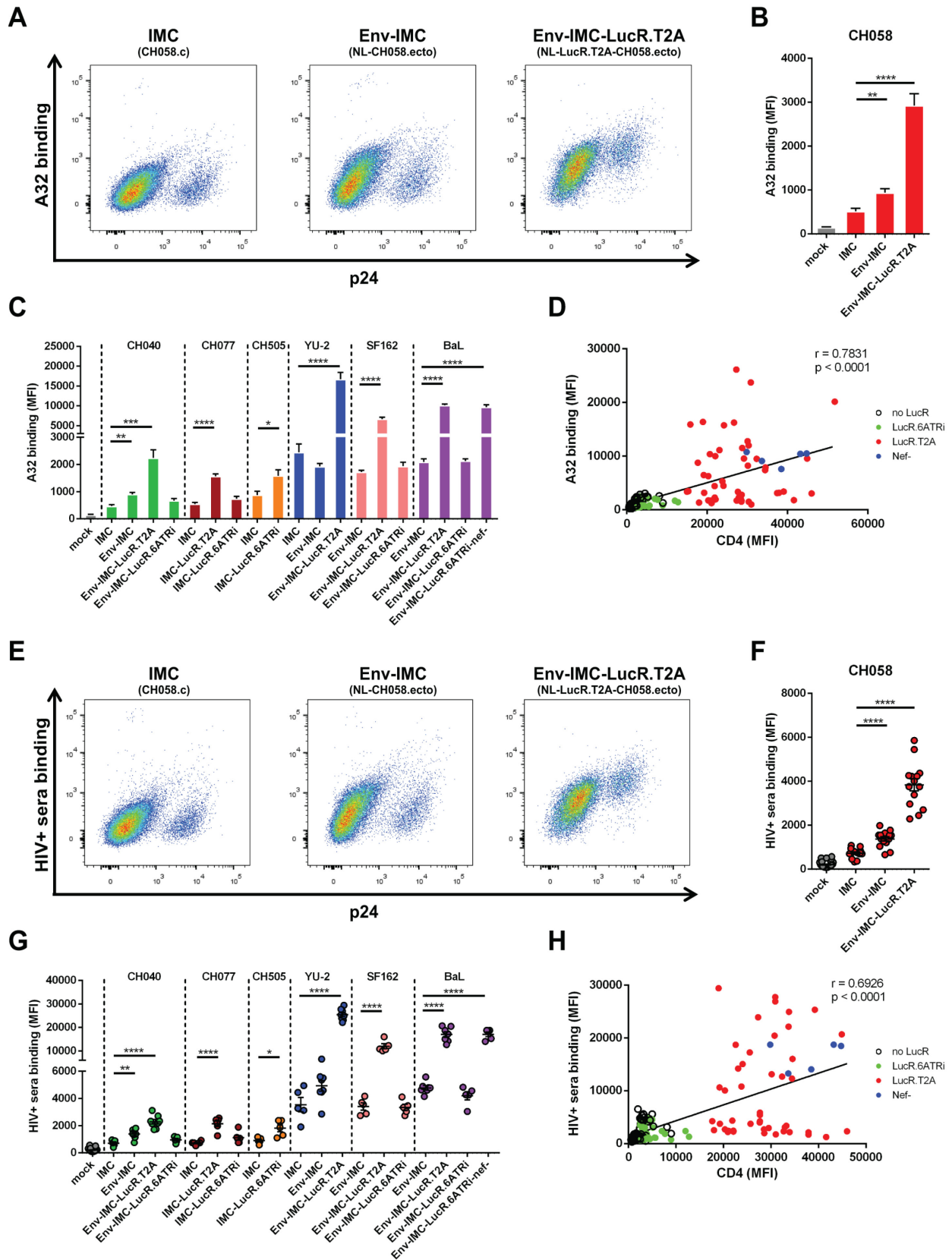
**Figure 3.2.1 - Schematic representation of HIV-1 IMC, Env-IMC, and their LucR reporter virus derivatives.**

Shown is the HIV-1 proviral genome representing either a full-length IMC (e.g., T/F strain) or a pNL4.3-based isogenic backbone engineered to encode the Env ectodomain (i.e., SU/gp120 and the extracellular and part of the membrane-spanning domain [MSD] portion of TM/gp41; shaded in pink) of heterologous HIV-1 strains. The cytoplasmic tail of Env is derived from backbone strain NL4-3, as is the signal peptide sequence. Also shown is how IMCs were modified for reporter gene expression by the insertion into the IMC backbone of the *Renilla* luciferase (LucR) open reading frame (yellow), followed by either the previously described 26-nucleotide (nt) IRES spacer region (blue) and the modified EMCV IRES element, 6ATRi (green), which drives expression of wild-type Nef; a 3-amino-acid-long functional deletion mutant (not shown); or the T2A ribosome-skipping peptide sequence (orange) in frame with *nef*. The arrows indicate translation start sites. \*, stop codon. The molecular strategies are based on those we previously described ([34](#), [35](#)). LTR, long terminal repeat;  $\psi$ , Psi packaging element.



**Figure 3.2.2 - Impact of the molecular strategy for LucR element insertion on Nef expression from reporter HIV-1 and CD4 downregulation.**

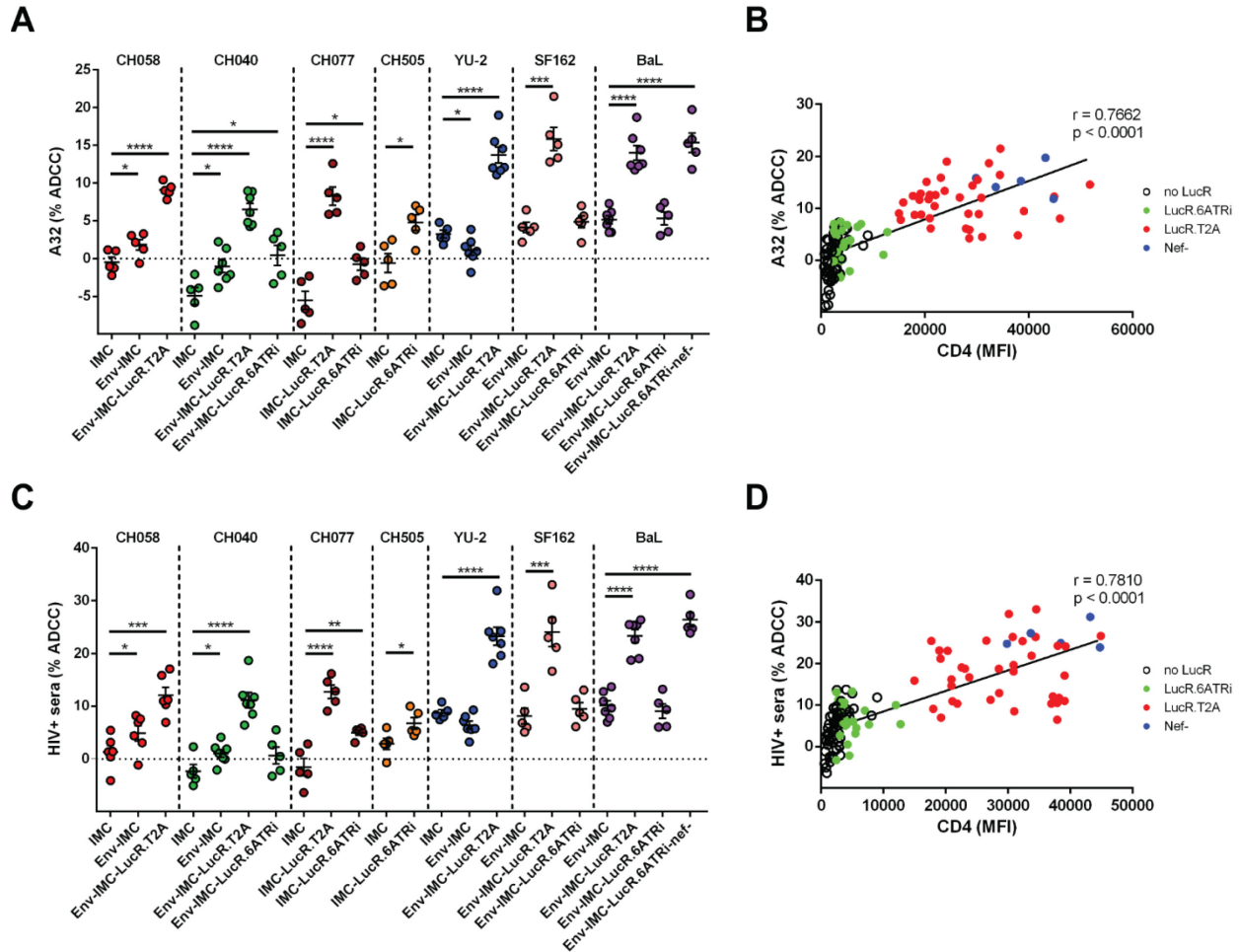
Cell surface staining with anti-CD4 antibody OKT4 of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells either mock infected or infected with IMCs expressing different Env strains (CH058, CH040, CH077, CH505, YU-2, SF162, and BaL) and expressing or not the LucR reporter. **(A to C)** Histograms depicting representative CD4 stainings **(A)** and the MFI of the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) population obtained in at least 5 independent experiments **(B and C)**. **(D)** Nef expression from cells infected with the indicated parental and LucR IMCs encoding CH058 or CH077 Env was monitored by Western blotting with antibodies directed against CA/p24 (for normalization) and Nef. **(E)** Nef expression levels correlated with detection of CD4 at the surfaces of infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) cells using a Pearson correlation test. The data are shown as means and standard errors of the mean (SEM). Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001).





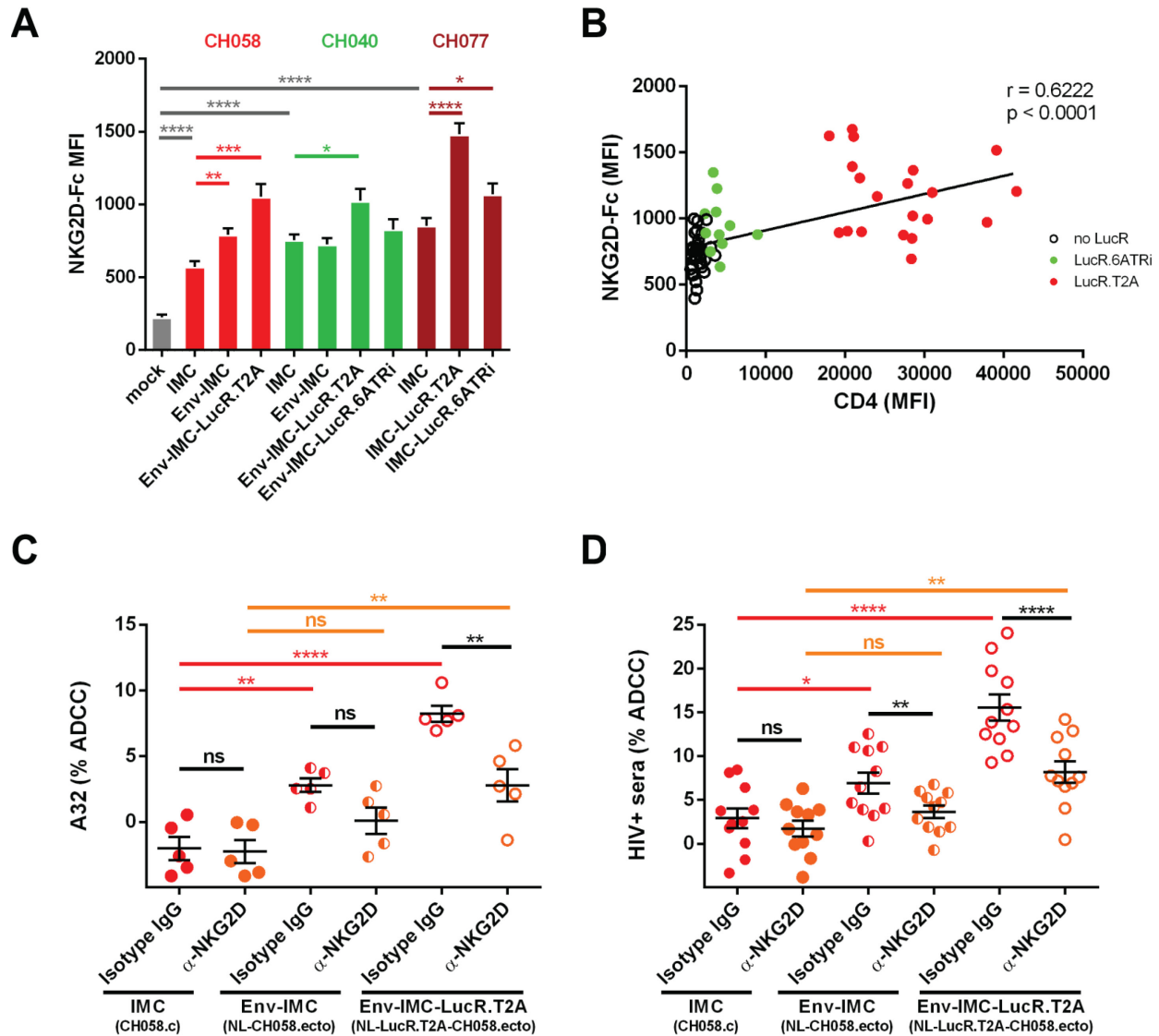
**Figure 3.2.3 - Impact of the molecular strategy for LucR reporter element insertion on Env conformation.**

Cell surface staining of primary CD4 T cells either mock infected or infected with IMCs expressing different Env strains (CH058, CH040, CH077, CH505, YU-2, SF162, and BaL) and expressing or not the LucR reporter gene with A32 (**A to D**) or HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**E to H**). (**A to C and E to G**) Histograms depicting representative A32 or HIV<sup>+</sup> serum staining (**A and E**) and the MFI in the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) population (**B, C, F, and G**) obtained in at least 5 independent experiments. (**D and H**) Spearman rank correlations between the levels of cell surface CD4 (detected with the anti-CD4 Ab OKT4) and Env staining performed with A32 or HIV<sup>+</sup> sera using different IMC constructs. The data are shown as means and SEM. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test (**B, C, F, and G**) or a Spearman correlation test (**D and H**) (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001).



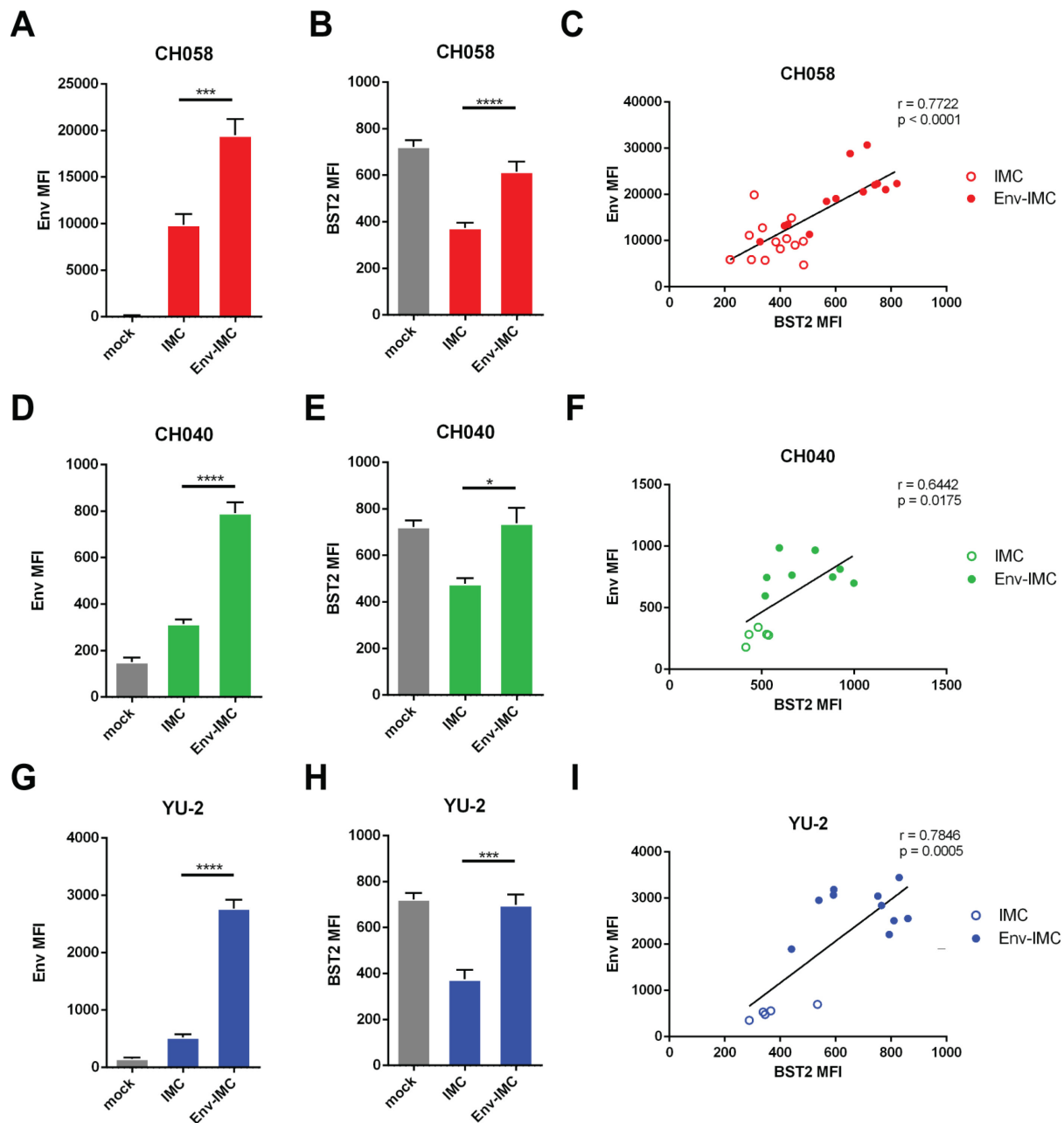
**Figure 3.2.4 - Susceptibility of cells infected with different parental and reporter IMCs to ADCC mediated by A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with IMCs expressing different Env strains (CH058, CH040, CH077, CH505, YU-2, SF162, and BaL) and expressing or not the LucR reporter gene were used as target cells, and autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in a well-established FACS-based ADCC assay (1, 9, 10, 60, 84). (A and C) Percentages of ADCC-mediated killing obtained with A32 or HIV<sup>+</sup> sera from 5 HIV-1-infected individuals obtained in at least 5 independent experiments. (B and D) Correlations between levels of cell surface CD4 and ADCC responses mediated by A32 or HIV<sup>+</sup> sera, using the same panel of IMC constructs, detected with the FACS-based ADCC assay. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test (A and C), a Pearson correlation test (B), or a Spearman rank correlation test (D) (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ).



**Figure 3.2.5 - Effect of the molecular strategy for LucR reporter element insertion on the expression of NKG2D ligands.**

Shown are the results of cell surface staining of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells either mock infected or infected with IMC constructs expressing different Env strains (CH058, CH040, and CH077) and expressing or not the LucR reporter gene with an NKG2D-Fc chimera protein that binds to NKG2D ligands. (A) MFI in the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) population obtained in at least 5 independent experiments. (B) Spearman rank correlation between CD4 levels and NKG2D ligand expression. (C and D) ADCC responses obtained in the presence of an anti-NKG2D Ab or its isotype control, as described in Materials and Methods. The data are shown as means and SEM. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test (A), a Spearman correlation test (B), or an unpaired (C) or a paired (D) one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) with a Holm-Sidak post-test (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ; ns, nonsignificant).



**Figure 3.2.6 - Impact of the proviral backbone on BST-2 downregulation and Env detection at the cell surface.**

Shown are the results of cell surface staining of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells either mock infected or infected with IMC constructs expressing different Envs (CH058, CH40, and YU2) with the conformation-independent anti-Env 2G12 (A), 10E8 (B and C), or anti-BST-2 (D to F). (A to F) MFI in the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) population obtained in at least 5 independent experiments. (G to I) Correlations between the levels of cell surface BST-2 and Env staining performed with 2G12 or 10E8 using different IMC constructs. The data are shown as means and SEM. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test (A to F) or a Pearson correlation test (G to I) (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001).

## **ARTICLE 4**

**La détection des protéines accessoires Nef et Vpu du VIH-1 par cytométrie en flux représente un nouvel outil pour étudier simultanément leur interaction fonctionnelle au sein d'une seule cellule infectée**

***Detection of the HIV-1 Accessory Proteins Nef and Vpu by Flow Cytometry Represents a New Tool to Study their Functional Interplay within a Single Infected CD4<sup>+</sup> T cell***

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**Contribution des auteurs:**

Conceptualisation: **J.P.**, J.R. et A.F.; Méthodologie: **J.P.**, J.R. et A.F.; Recherche: **J.P.**, J.R. et R.G.; Ressources: H.M., F.K., B.H.H., J.C.K., C.O. et A.F.; Analyse formelle: **J.P.**, J.R. et R.D.; Visualisation: **J.P.**; Supervision: A.F.; Obtention du financement: J.C.K., C.O. et A.F.; Rédaction - version originale: **J.P.**, J.R., B.H.H. et A.F.; Rédaction - révision et édition: **Tous les auteurs.**

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### 3.4.1 RÉSUMÉ

Les protéines accessoires Nef et Vpu du VIH-1 sont connues pour protéger les cellules infectées des réponses de cytotoxicité cellulaire dépendant des anticorps (ADCC) en limitant l'exposition des épitopes de l'enveloppe (Env) induits par CD4 (CD4i) à la surface des cellules. Bien que les deux protéines ciblent le récepteur CD4 de l'hôte pour le dégrader, l'étendue de leur redondance fonctionnelle est inconnue. Nous avons développé une technique de coloration intracellulaire qui permet la détection intracellulaire de Nef et Vpu dans les lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> primaires par cytométrie de flux. Grâce à cette méthode, nous montrons que l'expression combinée de Nef et de Vpu prédit la susceptibilité des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> primaires infectés par le VIH-1 à l'ADCC par le plasma VIH<sup>+</sup>. Nous montrons également que Vpu ne peut pas compenser l'absence de Nef, ce qui explique pourquoi certains clones moléculaires infectieux qui portent un gène rapporteur LucR en amont de Nef rendent les cellules infectées plus sensibles à la réponse ADCC. Notre méthode représente donc un nouvel outil pour disséquer l'activité biologique de Nef et Vpu dans le contexte d'autres protéines cellulaires et virales au sein d'un même lymphocyte T CD4<sup>+</sup> infecté.

### 3.4.2 ABSTRACT

The HIV-1 Nef and Vpu accessory proteins are known to protect infected cells from antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) responses by limiting exposure of CD4-induced (CD4i) envelope (Env) epitopes at the cell surface. Although both proteins target the host receptor CD4 for degradation, the extent of their functional redundancy is unknown. Here, we developed an intracellular staining technique that permits the intracellular detection of both Nef and Vpu in primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells by flow cytometry. Using this method, we show that the combined expression of Nef and Vpu predicts the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells to ADCC by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma. We also show that Vpu cannot compensate for the absence of Nef, thus providing an explanation for why some infectious molecular clones that carry a LucR reporter gene upstream of Nef render infected cells more susceptible to ADCC responses. Our method thus represents a new tool to dissect the biological activity of Nef and Vpu in the context of other host and viral proteins within single infected CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells.

### 3.4.3 IMPORTANCE

HIV-1 Nef and Vpu exert several biological functions that are important for viral immune evasion, release, and replication. Here, we developed a new method allowing simultaneous detection of these accessory proteins in their native form together with some of their cellular substrates. This allowed us to show that Vpu cannot compensate for the lack of a functional Nef, which has implications for studies that use Nef-defective viruses to study ADCC responses.

### 3.4.4 INTRODUCTION

The human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1) genome encodes four accessory proteins (Vif, Vpr, Vpu, and Nef), which are dispensable for viral replication *in vitro* but required for efficient replication, restriction factor counteraction, and immune evasion *in vivo* (1–7). Among them, Nef and Vpu are well known for their role in subverting the host cell protein trafficking machinery (8, 9).

HIV-1 Nef is a small cytoplasmic protein of 27 kDa produced from early viral transcripts (10) which requires a myristoyl group on its N-terminus to traffic to intracellular and plasma membranes (11). Nef harbors a highly conserved dileucine motif in its C-terminal flexible loop that is responsible for the interaction with clathrin adaptor protein complexes (AP-1, AP-2, and AP-3) (12). Among these, interaction with AP-2 is required to downregulate the CD4 receptor from the surface of infected cells (13, 14) and target it for degradation in lysosomal compartments (15, 16).

HIV-1 Vpu is a small type I transmembrane protein of 16 kDa produced late in the viral replication cycle (17, 18) and contains a short luminal N-terminal peptide followed by a single helical transmembrane domain and a C-terminal cytoplasmic domain (19–21). The cytoplasmic domain comprises two  $\alpha$ -helices linked by a flexible loop known for its interaction with the SCF <sup>$\beta$ TRCP</sup> E3 ubiquitin ligase complex via a conserved phosphoserine motif (DS<sup>P</sup>GNES<sup>P</sup>) (22, 23). Vpu mainly localizes within intracellular compartments, notably, the endoplasmic reticulum (ER) and the *trans*-Golgi network (TGN) (24–26). Like Nef, Vpu also induces degradation of newly synthesized CD4 by directing it through an ER-associated pathway (ERAD) for further proteasomal degradation (22, 27–29). In addition, Vpu sequesters the restriction factor BST-2 in



the TGN using its transmembrane domain and thereby increasing the release of progeny virions (30–33).

CD4 downregulation by Nef and Vpu was previously reported to be critical for efficient viral replication in T cells by enhancing virion release and infectivity and by preventing superinfection (34–39). CD4 downregulation is critical for immune evasion since the anti-Env antibody (Ab) response is dominated by non-neutralizing antibodies (nnAbs) that target Env in its “open” CD4-bound conformation (40–42). The interaction between CD4 and Env at the surface of HIV-1-infected cells has been shown to promote nnAbs binding to Env, leading to the elimination of infected cells through Fc-mediated effector functions, including antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) and complement-dependent cytotoxicity (41, 43, 44). Nef and Vpu limit the presence of Env-CD4 complexes at the cell surface and thus protect infected cells against ADCC (41, 43, 45).

In previous studies, Nef and Vpu expression was mostly examined in transfected cell lines, frequently using tagged proteins (30, 31, 46, 47) or by performing Western blot analysis and immunofluorescence microscopy in infected primary cells (48–53). However, both proteins are small, intracellularly located, and present in small amounts, rendering their detection difficult. To facilitate their analysis in primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, we developed an intracellular staining technique to detect Nef and Vpu expression by flow cytometry, which allows the simultaneous detection of these proteins together with host and viral proteins within a single infected cell. Using this method, we show that Nef and Vpu expression predicts the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells to ADCC by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma. We also explain why decreased Nef expression in widely used reporter viruses increases the susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC responses.

### 3.4.5 RESULTS

#### **Intracellular detection of Nef and Vpu in HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells.**

To facilitate detection of intracellular Nef, we obtained a polyclonal Nef antiserum through the NIH AIDS Reagent Program, which was generated by immunization of rabbits with a recombinant clade B Nef consensus protein produced in *Escherichia coli* (54). In previous studies,

this antibody detected native Nef proteins by Western blotting and immunofluorescence microscopy in both transfected and infected cells (48, 55–57). Given the scarcity of anti-Vpu antibodies, we immunized rabbits with a peptide corresponding to the clade B Vpu C-terminal region (residues 69 to 81). A similar approach was previously used to generate a polyclonal antibody capable of detecting Vpu by Western blotting and immunofluorescence microscopy (24, 58).

We first evaluated the ability of both Nef and Vpu antisera to recognize their cognate antigen using HEK 293T cells transfected with plasmids expressing the Nef or Vpu proteins from the transmitted/founder (T/F) virus CH058 (59, 60). Cells were permeabilized and stained with the antisera 48 h post-transfection, followed by detection with a fluorescently labeled anti-rabbit secondary antibody. As expected, the Nef antiserum recognized only Nef-transfected cells, while the Vpu antiserum recognized only Vpu-transfected cells (**Fig. 3.3.1A to C**). To evaluate whether our method detected Nef and Vpu when expressed in a biologically relevant culture system, we infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells with CH058 infectious molecular clones (IMC) encoding Nef and/or Vpu proteins. While wild-type (WT)-infected cells were efficiently recognized by both Nef and Vpu antisera, abrogation of Nef (**Fig. 3.3.1D and E**) or Vpu (**Fig. 3.3.1F and G**) expression prevented the recognition of productively infected cells as identified by Gag protein intracellular staining (p24<sup>+</sup>). Of note, mock-infected or uninfected bystander cells (p24<sup>-</sup>) were not detected by either antiserum, further confirming their specificity (**Fig. 3.3.1D to G**).

We next examined the antiserum binding to Nef and Vpu proteins from different HIV-1 clades and groups as well as from closely related simian immunodeficiency viruses (SIV). Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with a panel of HIV-1 IMCs representing clades B, C, A1, and CRF01\_AE. As expected, both Nef and Vpu antisera recognized their respective antigen in cells infected with clade B viruses since both were raised against clade B immunogens (**Fig. 3.3.1H and I**). The anti-Nef polyclonal antibody was also able to recognize Nef proteins from group M clades C, A1, and CRF01\_AE as well as the Nef from a group O isolate. This recognition extended even to the Nef protein of a related SIVcpzPts strain (isolate TAN2) but not to chimeric simian-human immunodeficiency viruses (SHIV) which express an SIVmac Nef (**Fig. 3.3.1H**). The Vpu antiserum was less cross-reactive and failed to detect Vpu from clade C viruses (**Fig. 3.3.1I**). These

findings confirmed the specificity and cross-reactivity of the intracellular detection of Nef and Vpu using infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells.

### **Measuring CD4 and BST-2 downregulation in infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells with or without Nef and Vpu expression.**

The efficient detection of Nef and Vpu at the single cell level by flow cytometry allowed us to combine this approach with the quantification of CD4 and BST-2 expression levels on the cell surface. Productively-infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup>) expressing both Nef and Vpu had little detectable CD4 and BST-2 compared to uninfected cells (**Fig. 3.3.2A**). In contrast, cells infected with Vpu- or Nef-defective viruses differed in the extent of CD4 and BST-2 downregulation (**Fig. 3.3.2A**).

Vpu targets CD4 and BST-2 by different mechanisms. First, Vpu interacts with multiple transmembrane proteins, including BST-2, through its transmembrane domain (TMD), which sequesters these proteins in perinuclear compartments ([32](#), [33](#), [61–64](#)). Second, Vpu downregulates CD4 by interaction of its cytoplasmic domain with the cytoplasmic tail of CD4 ([65–70](#)). Consistent with these different interaction modes, Vpu-mediated CD4 and BST-2 degradation involves independent pathways (proteasomal and lysosomal degradation, respectively), both of which depend on polyubiquitination by the SCF<sup>βTRCP</sup> E3 ubiquitin ligase complex, recruited by Vpu using its highly conserved phosphoserine motif ([22](#), [26](#), [71](#), [72](#)). To examine whether we could measure the expression and activity of Vpu mutants by flow cytometry, we introduced mutations at critical residues of the Vpu TMD (A14L/A18L) or its phosphoserine motif (S52A/S56A). CH058 IMCs coding for wild-type or mutated Vpu proteins were used to infect primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells. While the TMD mutations did not affect Vpu expression, the phosphoserine mutations led to a significant accumulation of intracellular Vpu proteins (**Fig. 3.3.2B**), most likely because Vpu is degraded together with its target protein as a ubiquitinated complex ([24](#), [73](#), [74](#)). Despite a higher expression level, the Vpu phosphoserine mutant was unable to downregulate CD4 and was marginally diminished in its capacity to antagonize BST-2 (**Fig. 3.3.2C to F**). This is consistent with studies demonstrating that the recruitment of the SCF<sup>βTRCP</sup> E3 ubiquitin ligase complex and the degradation of BST-2 by Vpu is dissociable from its capacity to antagonize the restriction factor ([32](#), [72](#), [75–77](#)). In contrast, the Vpu TMD mutations did not affect Vpu's ability to target CD4 but completely abrogated its capacity to downregulate BST-2

(Fig. 3.3.2C to F). Together, these results emphasize the need for measuring Nef and Vpu expression when studying their biological functions.

### **Nef and Vpu expression inversely correlates with ADCC responses.**

CD4 downregulation by Nef and Vpu together with Vpu-mediated BST-2 antagonism were found to be critical factors preventing the exposure of vulnerable CD4-induced Env epitopes, thus protecting HIV-1-infected cells from ADCC (41, 43, 45, 78–81). To investigate the link between Nef and Vpu expression and HIV-1-infected cell immune evasion, we infected activated primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from five HIV-negative individuals with two clade B IMCs, CH058 T/F and JR-FL, encoding functional or defective *nef* and *vpu* genes. Focusing on the productively infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup>), we performed a comprehensive characterization of the patterns of viral protein expression, including cell-surface Env (detected with the conformation-independent Ab 2G12), intracellular Nef, and Vpu in combination with cell-surface levels of CD4 and BST-2. We also measured the specific recognition and elimination of infected cells by ADCC using the CD4-induced (CD4i) A32 monoclonal Ab (mAb). This antibody binds the cluster A region of the gp120, which is occluded in the “closed” trimer and therefore, can only bind Env in the “open” CD4-bound conformation. We also tested 25 different plasma samples from chronically HIV-1-infected individuals. As expected, Nef was only expressed by WT and Vpu<sup>-</sup> constructs, while Vpu was only expressed by WT and Nef<sup>-</sup> constructs (Fig. 3.3.3A). Consistent with previous reports (43, 78, 79), deletion of Nef strongly impaired CD4 downregulation by both viruses but did not affect Env or BST-2 cell-surface levels. Vpu deletion mitigated CD4 downregulation to a lesser extent than Nef and abrogated BST-2 downmodulation, resulting in an overall increase in the amount of cell-surface Env (Fig. 3.3.3B). The cumulative effect of Nef and Vpu on cell-surface levels of Env, CD4, and BST-2 prevented the recognition of infected cells and protected them from ADCC responses mediated by A32 and HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma (Fig. 3.3.3C and D). In contrast, abrogation of Nef or Vpu expression resulted in increased recognition and susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC mediated by nnAbs (Fig. 3.3.3C and D). We performed correlation analyses to measure the level of association between the different cellular, virological, and immunological variables (Fig. 3.3.3E and F). We found that both Nef and Vpu established a large network of inverse correlations with cellular and immunological factors. Interestingly, Env levels hardly contributed to the network and were poorly associated with the immunological outcome, thus indicating that the overall amount

of Env present at the surface does not dictate ADCC responses mediated by CD4i Abs or HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma but, rather, the conformation Env occupies. Apart from antibody binding, ADCC responses mediated by nnAbs correlated strongly with CD4 and Nef levels (**Fig. 3.3.3E and F**). Overall, Nef and Vpu expression inversely correlates with the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC mediated by CD4i Abs and HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma.

### **Impaired Nef expression from IMC LucR.T2A constructs enhance the susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC.**

Infectious molecular clones encoding the Renilla luciferase (LucR) reporter gene upstream of the *nef* sequence and a T2A ribosome-skipping peptide to drive Nef expression are widely employed to quantify anti-HIV-1 ADCC responses ([82–95](#)). Despite evidence that Nef-mediated CD4 downregulation is impaired when using these IMCs ([55](#), [80](#)), a series of recent studies have hypothesized that Vpu can compensate for the absence of Nef expression and completely downregulate CD4 on its own ([96–100](#)). To evaluate this hypothesis, we used our intracellular staining to measure Nef and Vpu expression levels and study their impact on ADCC responses mediated by nnAbs against cells infected with IMC-LucR.T2A constructs. Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with NL4.3-based IMCs that do (Env-IMC-LucR.T2A) or do not encode (Env-IMC) a LucR.T2A cassette. These IMCs express the Env ectodomain from two clade B viruses, CH058 T/F and YU-2. Consistent with the lack of Nef detection by Western blotting ([55](#), [80](#)), insertion of the LucR.T2A cassette also impaired the detection of Nef by flow cytometry, while Vpu expression remained unchanged (**Fig. 3.3.4A and B**). However, we noted an accumulation of cell-surface CD4 for Env-IMC-LucR.T2A compared to *nef*-intact constructs (~20-fold higher) (**Fig. 3.3.4C**), which resulted in a significantly increased recognition and susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC responses mediated by A32 mAb and HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma (**Fig. 3.3.4D and E**). Of note, both the binding and the ADCC responses mediated by nnAbs were strongly associated with CD4 levels and inversely correlated with Nef expression (**Fig. 3.3.4F and G**). In contrast, these variables were poorly correlated with Vpu expression. Based on these data, it seems clear that Vpu expression alone is not sufficient to prevent ADCC-mediated killing of infected cells and that HIV-1 requires both Nef and Vpu for efficient humoral response evasion.

### **Nef, Vpu, and CD4 levels predict ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma.**

We next used univariate multiple linear regression (MLR) analysis to evaluate the capacity of different variables to predict ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma. This model is based on the hypothesis that a linear relationship exists between the dependent variable quantified empirically and the independent variables that serve as predictive variables. In our model, the dependent variable is the ADCC responses mediated by plasma from HIV-1 donors (ADCC HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma), and the independent variables are the cellular, virological, and immunological factors measured on infected cells. To run the MLR model, we combined data obtained with the different viral constructs (**Fig. 3.3.3 and 3.3.4**) and plotted the mean ADCC obtained with 25 HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma samples against a single virus on the *x* axis and the associated predicted ADCC value based on one or more independent variables on the *y* axis. When looking at cellular factors, we noticed that only CD4 accurately predicts ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma, independent of the viral strain (**Fig. 3.3.5A**). Even though BST-2 displayed a strong correlation with ADCC responses (**Fig. 3.3.3E**), it was not predictive. When focusing on virological variables, we observed that Nef is the only significant ADCC predictive variable, albeit not as good as CD4 (**Fig. 3.3.5A and B**). However, combinations of Nef with Vpu or Env increased its predictive scores, reaching similar levels as CD4 when combined with Vpu (**Fig. 3.3.5B**). Of note, the strength of the prediction was not further improved when combining all three virological variables altogether. As for immunological variables, their capacity to predict ADCC by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma was found to be equivalent or even higher than for cellular and virological factors (**Fig. 3.3.5C**). Indeed, the binding of HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma predicted ADCC values with a similar score as CD4 or Nef and Vpu combined, while the binding of A32 predicted ADCC by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma even better (**Fig. 3.3.5A to C**). This could be explained by the fact that A32-like Abs present in plasma from infected individuals are from the main class of Abs (anti-cluster A Abs) mediating ADCC responses against infected cells ([41](#), [81](#), [82](#), [92](#), [101](#)). In line with this interpretation, ADCC mediated by A32 was found to have a near-perfect predictive ability, suggesting that factors other than antibody binding are presumably needed to fully explain the ADCC phenotypes observed (**Fig. 3.3.5C**).

### 3.4.6 DISCUSSION

Unlike simple retroviruses, HIV-1 and related SIVs encode multiple accessory proteins that promote viral replication and immune evasion ([102](#)). Among them, Nef and Vpu modulate the expression, trafficking, localization, and function of several host cell surface proteins, including

the viral receptor CD4, restriction factors, and homing receptors (28, 30, 31, 63, 70, 103–107). They also modulate a wide range of immunoreceptors to evade immune responses mediated by CD8<sup>+</sup> T, NK, and NKT cells (108–116). Most of these host cell proteins are naturally expressed on primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, the preferential target of HIV-1. The detection of Nef and Vpu has previously been done in transfected cells (30, 31, 47, 49, 50, 117), which results in the overexpression of the viral proteins compared to infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells. Moreover, tagged viral proteins are frequently used to facilitate their detection (30, 31, 47, 49, 50, 117). Protein overexpression and/or tag insertion have the potential to impact the trafficking and functions of these accessory proteins. To study Nef and Vpu's biological activities in a physiologically relevant system, we developed an intracellular staining method to detect native Nef and Vpu proteins in HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells by flow cytometry. Using Nef and Vpu antisera, we detected both viral proteins with high specificity in cells productively infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) with multiple IMCs. The Nef antiserum was cross-reactive, detecting Nef from group M (clades B, C, A1, and CRF01\_AE) from a group O isolate and from a closely related SIVcpz strain. In contrast, the Vpu antiserum recognized only clade B Vpu proteins, consistent with the fact that we used a peptide from the C-terminal region of clade B Vpu. This region is highly variable among group M viruses (118). More conserved regions of Vpu map to the transmembrane domain of the protein and the  $\beta$ TRCP binding site (119, 120). However, these regions are either buried in the plasma membrane or occluded by cellular partners and thus are not readily accessible for antibody recognition. While the generation of a broad Vpu antiserum is challenging, it may be possible to generate clade-specific Vpu antisera by immunization using peptides corresponding to the C-terminal region specific for a given clade.

Nef and Vpu intracellular detection by flow cytometry represents an excellent tool to study their biological activities in HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells. This method allows for the detection of cell-surface substrates or antibody recognition of surface Env and the concomitant detection of Nef and Vpu expression within a single infected cell (**Fig. 3.3.2A**). Infected CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells represent the most relevant system to study the complex interplay between these two accessory proteins and the wide range of host cell factors naturally expressed by T cells. Recent findings revealed that modulation of BST-2 levels by type I IFNs impacts the capacity of Vpu to downregulate NTB-A, PVR, CD62L, and TIM-3, thus reducing its polyfunctionality (64, 70). Nef

and Vpu also display overlapping functions, as they share the capacity to downregulate several cell-surface proteins, including CD4, PVR, CD62L, and CD28 (8, 57, 63, 113, 121). The expression levels of one viral protein could therefore modulate the biological activities of the other, making it essential to study their functions in a context where both viral proteins are expressed simultaneously at physiological levels. Thus, our intracellular staining measuring Nef/Vpu expression and functionality in HIV-1-infected cells represents a new approach to better characterize their functional interplay.

Increasing evidence points toward Env conformation on the surface of infected cells as a critical parameter of ADCC susceptibility to HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma (41, 122–124). Non-neutralizing antibodies in the plasma from HIV-1-infected individuals target epitopes that are only exposed when Env interacts with cell-surface CD4, thus adopting the open CD4-bound conformation (41, 43). Nef and Vpu contribute to protect HIV-1-infected cells from ADCC by limiting Env-CD4 interaction via CD4 downregulation and BST-2 antagonism (41, 43, 45, 78, 79). Here, we confirm and extend previous observations by showing that Nef and Vpu expression predicts the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells to ADCC responses. In agreement with recent studies (45, 80), we found that CD4 accurately predicted the susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC (Fig. 3.3.5). Given its enhanced capacity to downregulate CD4 compared to Env or Vpu (34, 41, 43, 121), Nef represents the main viral factor influencing ADCC responses mediated by CD4-induced ligands (Fig. 3.3.5B). On the contrary, BST-2 and Env expression, alone or in combination, were unable to accurately predict the susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC. These results are consistent with previous reports suggesting that Env conformation and CD4 reactivity, rather than overall cell-surface Env levels, drive ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma (41, 43, 123–125). This is also in agreement with recent work showing that BST-2 upregulation by type I IFNs enhances cell-surface Env levels without increasing the susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma, unless CD4-mimetics are used to “open-up” Env and stabilize the CD4-bound conformation (126).

A series of recent studies using LucR.T2A IMCs have hypothesized that Vpu can compensate for the absence of Nef expression by fully downregulating cell-surface CD4 (96–100). Our results show that this is not the case. Consistent with its role in targeting CD4 already present



at the plasma membrane, the impact of Nef on CD4 downmodulation is more prominent (**Fig. 3.3.2 and 3.3.3**) ([34](#), [41](#), [43](#), [121](#)). In its absence, Vpu was unable to fully downregulate CD4, thus sensitizing infected cells to ADCC responses. These results highlight the importance of selecting full-length unmutated IMCs with proper Nef and Vpu expression to generate biologically relevant ADCC measurements. For example, a recent manuscript recently reported no differences in ADCC susceptibility between cells infected with clade B, clade C, or CRF01\_AE IMCs ([127](#)), while previous studies have shown otherwise ([123](#), [128](#)). In this article ([127](#)), the authors use functionally Nef-defective LucR.T2A IMCs, which results in incomplete CD4 downregulation and therefore exposure of Env in its CD4-bound conformation at the cell surface (**Fig. 3.3.4**) ([80](#)). Thus, it is not surprising that the usage of Nef-defective viruses skews ADCC responses in favor of nnAbs and mitigates the intrinsic differences that exist between Env from different clades. Fortunately, several alternatives to the use of LucR.T2A IMCs are available to measure ADCC against productively infected cells ([129](#)), including the infected cell elimination (ICE) assay, which measures the loss of productively infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup>) by flow cytometry and allows the utilization of unmodified IMCs. Utilization of an NK cell-resistant T cell line expressing a Tat-driven luciferase reporter gene (CEM.NKr-CCR5-sLTR-Luc) as target cells also represents an option ([130](#)). Finally, luciferase reporter IMCs (referred to as LucR.6ATRi IMCs) expressing similar levels of Nef as those obtained with unmodified IMCs are also available. These IMCs utilize a modified encephalomyocarditis virus (EMCV) internal ribosome entry site (IRES) element in lieu of T2A ([55](#), [80](#)). Thus, LucR.6ATRi reporter viruses represent a biologically relevant alternative to LucR.T2A IMCs when measuring ADCC mediated by nnAbs and plasma collected from infected or vaccinated individuals.

### 3.4.7 MATERIALS AND METHODS

#### **Ethics statement**

Written informed consent was obtained from all study participants (the Montreal Primary HIV Infection Cohort [[131](#), [132](#)] and the Canadian Cohort of HIV Infected Slow Progressors [[133–135](#)]), and research adhered to the ethical guidelines of CRCHUM and was reviewed and approved by the CRCHUM institutional review board (ethics committee, approval number CE 16.164-CA). Research adhered to the standards indicated by the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants were adults and provided informed written consent prior to enrollment, in accordance with institutional review board approval.

#### **Cell lines and isolation of primary cells**

HEK293T human embryonic kidney cells (obtained from ATCC) were grown as previously described ([136](#)). Primary human peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) and CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were isolated, activated, and cultured as previously described ([43](#)). Briefly, PBMCs were obtained by leukapheresis from HIV-negative individuals (4 males and 1 female), and CD4<sup>+</sup> T lymphocytes were purified from resting PBMCs by negative selection using immunomagnetic beads per the manufacturer's instructions (StemCell Technologies, Vancouver, BC) and were activated with phytohemagglutinin-L (10 µg/mL) for 48 h and then maintained in RPMI 1640 complete medium supplemented with rIL-2 (100 U/mL).

#### **Plasmids and proviral constructs**

The vesicular stomatitis virus G (VSV-G)-encoding plasmid was previously described ([137](#)). Transmitted/founder (T/F) and chronic infectious molecular clones (IMCs) of patients CH040, CH058, CH077, CH131, CH141, CH167, CH185, CH198, CH236, CH269, CH293, CH440, CH470, CH505, CH534, CH850, CM235, MCST, REJO, RHGA, RHPA, STCO, SUMA, TRJO, WARO, WITO, WR27, 40061, 703357, and 851891 were inferred, constructed, and biologically characterized as previously described ([123](#), [138–147](#)). The IMCs encoding HIV-1 reference strains AD8, JR-FL, JR-CSF, NL4-3, and YU-2 were described elsewhere ([148–153](#)). HIV-1 group O (RBF206), SIVcpz (TAN2), and chimeric SIVmac/HIV-1 IMC constructs (SHIV<sub>AD8-EO</sub> and SHIV.AE.40100) were generated as previously published ([154–157](#)). CH058

IMCs defective for Vpu and/or Nef expression were previously described (59). To generate a *nef*-defective JR-FL IMC, a frameshift mutation was introduced at the unique XhoI restriction site within the *nef* gene, resulting in a premature stop codon at position 47. To generate *vpu*-defective JR-FL IMCs, two stop-codons were introduced directly after the start-codon of *vpu* using the QuikChange II XL site-directed mutagenesis protocol (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA). The presence of the desired mutations was determined by automated DNA sequencing. Proviral constructs, collectively referred to as Env-IMCs, comprising an HIV-1 NL4.3-based isogenic backbone engineered for the insertion of heterologous *env* strain sequences and expression in *cis* of full-length Env (pNL.CH058.ecto and pNL.YU-2.ecto), were previously described (48). In the same study, isogenic proviral constructs encoding *Renilla* luciferase (LucR) followed in-frame by a ribosome-skipping T2A peptide intended to drive Nef expression were also reported (collectively referred to as Env-IMC-LucR.T2A) (48). Construction of plasmids encoding CH058 Vpu and CH058 Nef in the pCGCG-IRES-eGFP expression vector was previously described (59, 60).

### **Viral production and infections**

To achieve a similar level of infection in primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells among the different IMCs tested, VSV-G-pseudotyped HIV-1 viruses were produced and titrated as previously described (123). Viruses were then used to infect activated primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from healthy HIV-1-negative donors by spin infection at 800 × g for 1 h in 96-well plates at 25°C.

### **Antibodies and plasma**

The following Abs were used to assess cell-surface Env staining: A32, 2G12 (NIH AIDS Reagent Program), and PGT135 (IAVI). Mouse anti-human CD4 (clone OKT4; Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA) and mouse anti-human BST-2 (clone RS38E, PE-Cy7-conjugated; BioLegend, San Diego, CA, USA) were also used as primary antibodies for cell-surface staining. Goat anti-mouse and anti-human antibodies precoupled to Alexa Fluor 647 (Invitrogen, Rockford, IL, USA) were used as secondary antibodies in flow cytometry experiments. Plasma from HIV-infected individuals was collected, heat-inactivated, and conserved at -80°C until use. Rabbit antisera raised against a Nef consensus protein (NIH AIDS Reagent Program) or against a Vpu C-terminal peptide (70) were used as primary antibodies in intracellular staining. Brilliant Violet 421 (BV421)-conjugated donkey anti-rabbit antibodies (BioLegend) were

used as secondary antibodies to detect Nef and Vpu antisera binding by flow cytometry. To avoid any potential cross-reactivity with the anti-rabbit secondary antibodies used for intracellular staining, mouse monoclonal antibodies were used to detect CD4 and BST-2 proteins.

### **Flow cytometry analysis of cell-surface and intracellular staining**

Cell-surface staining of infected cells was performed as previously described ([41](#)). Binding of cell-surface HIV-1 Env by anti-Env mAbs (5 $\mu$ g/mL) or HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma (1:1,000 dilution) was performed at 48 h post-infection. Infected cells were then permeabilized using the Cytotfix/Cytoperm fixation/permeabilization kit (BD Biosciences, Mississauga, ON, Canada) and stained intracellularly using phycoerythrin (PE)-conjugated mouse anti-p24 mAb (clone KC57; Beckman Coulter, Brea, CA, USA; 1:100 dilution) in combination with Nef or Vpu rabbit antisera (1:1,000 dilution). The percentage of infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup>) was determined by gating on the living cell population according to viability dye staining (Aqua Vivid; Thermo Fisher Scientific). Alternatively, intracellular staining was assessed on 293T expressing Nef or Vpu proteins. Briefly, 2  $\times$  10<sup>6</sup> 293T cells were transfected with 7  $\mu$ g of Nef or Vpu expressor with the calcium-phosphate method. At 48 h post-transfection, 293T cells were stained intracellularly with rabbit antisera raised against Nef or Vpu (1:1,000). Samples were acquired on an LSR II cytometer (BD Biosciences), and data analysis was performed using FlowJo v10.5.3 (Tree Star, Ashland, OR, USA).

### **FACS-based ADCC assay**

Measurement of ADCC using the fluorescence-activated cell sorter (FACS)-based assay was performed at 48 h post-infection as previously described ([43](#), [122](#)). Briefly, HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were stained with Aqua Vivid viability dye and cell proliferation dye eFluor 670 (Thermo Fisher Scientific) and used as target cells. Autologous PBMC effector cells, stained with cell proliferation dye eFluor 450 (Thermo Fisher Scientific), were added at an effector:target ratio of 10:1 in 96-well V-bottom plates (Corning, Corning, NY). A 1:1,000 final dilution of plasma or 5  $\mu$ g/mL of A32 mAb was added to the appropriate wells, and cells were incubated for 5 min at room temperature. The plates were subsequently centrifuged for 1 min at 300  $\times$  g and incubated at 37°C, 5% CO<sub>2</sub>, for 5 h before being fixed in a 2% phosphate-buffered saline (PBS)-formaldehyde solution. Samples were acquired on an LSR II cytometer (BD Biosciences), and

data analysis was performed using FlowJo v10.5.3 (Tree Star). The percentage of ADCC was calculated with the following formula: (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in targets plus effectors) - (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in targets plus effectors plus plasma)/(% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in targets) by gating on infected live target cells. Negative ADCC values can be observed when uninfected p24<sup>+</sup> cells are eliminated in a larger proportion than infected p24<sup>+</sup> cells as previously reported ([158](#), [159](#)).

### **Software scripts and visualization**

Correlograms were generated using the corrplot package in R v4.1.012 and RStudio v1.4.1106 ([160](#), [161](#)). Correlation networks were created using the ggraph and igraph packages in R in undirected mode, clustered based on the igraph layout “star.” Edges are weighted according to *P* values (inversely). Edges are only shown if *P* is < 0.05, and nodes without edges were removed. Nodes are sized according to the *r* values of connecting edges. Multiple linear regression analyses were performed using GraphPad Prism software (v9.1.0). The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was used as a metric to measure the proportion of the variation observed with the dependent variable that can be explained by the variation in the independent variables. Since  $R^2$  values usually increase when more predictive variables are added to the model, we also measured the adjusted  $R^2$  (adj.  $R^2$ ) to account for this caveat. Individual values for each virus and every parameter were used to generate the correlograms and correlation networks, while multiple linear regression analyses were performed using mean values.

### **Statistical analysis**

Statistics were analyzed using Prism v9.1.0 (GraphPad, San Diego, CA, USA). Every data set was tested for statistical normality, and this information was used to apply the appropriate (parametric or nonparametric) statistical test. *P* values of < 0.05 were considered significant; significance values are indicated as \*, *P* < 0.05; \*\*, *P* < 0.01; \*\*\*, *P* < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, *P* < 0.0001.

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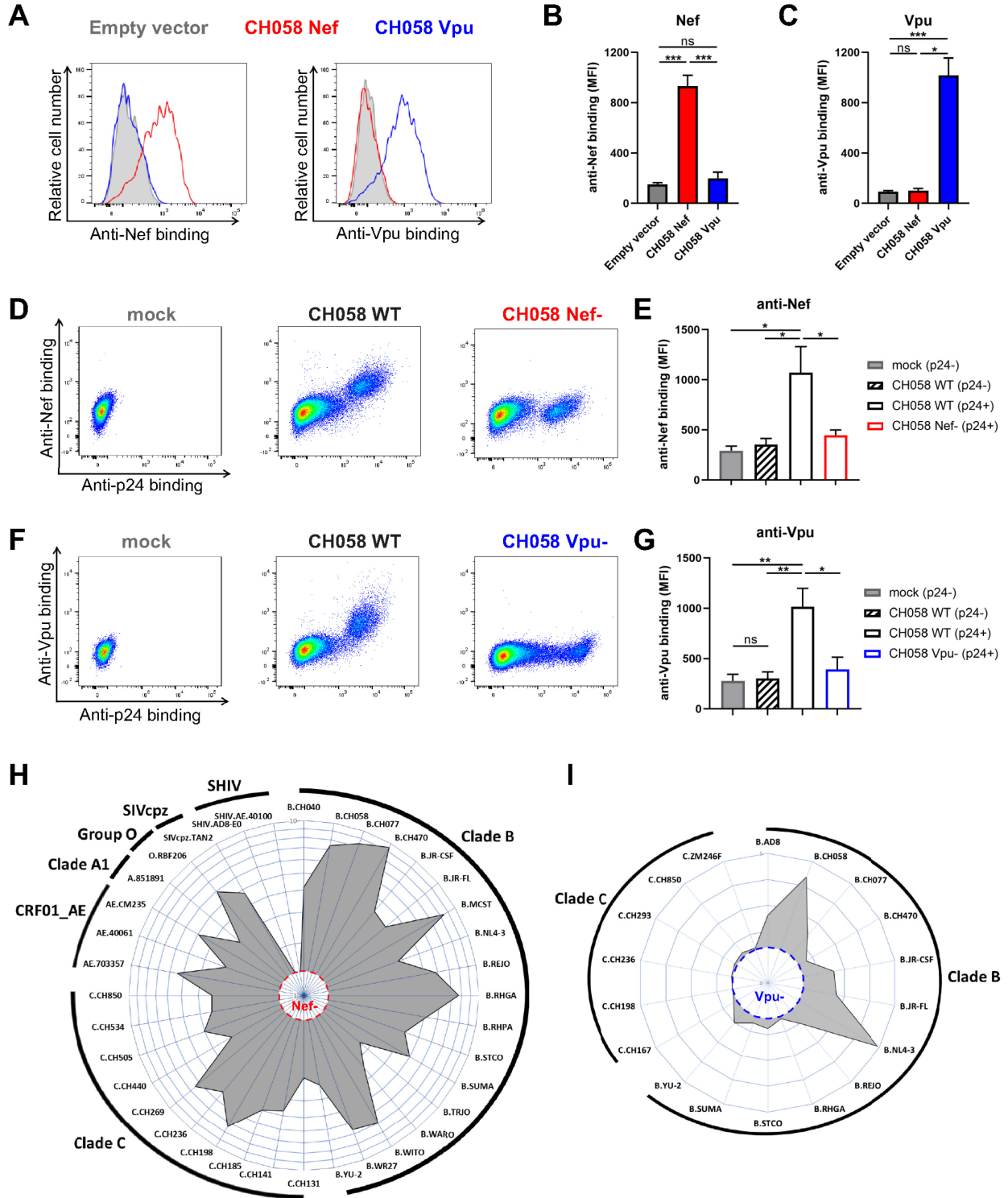
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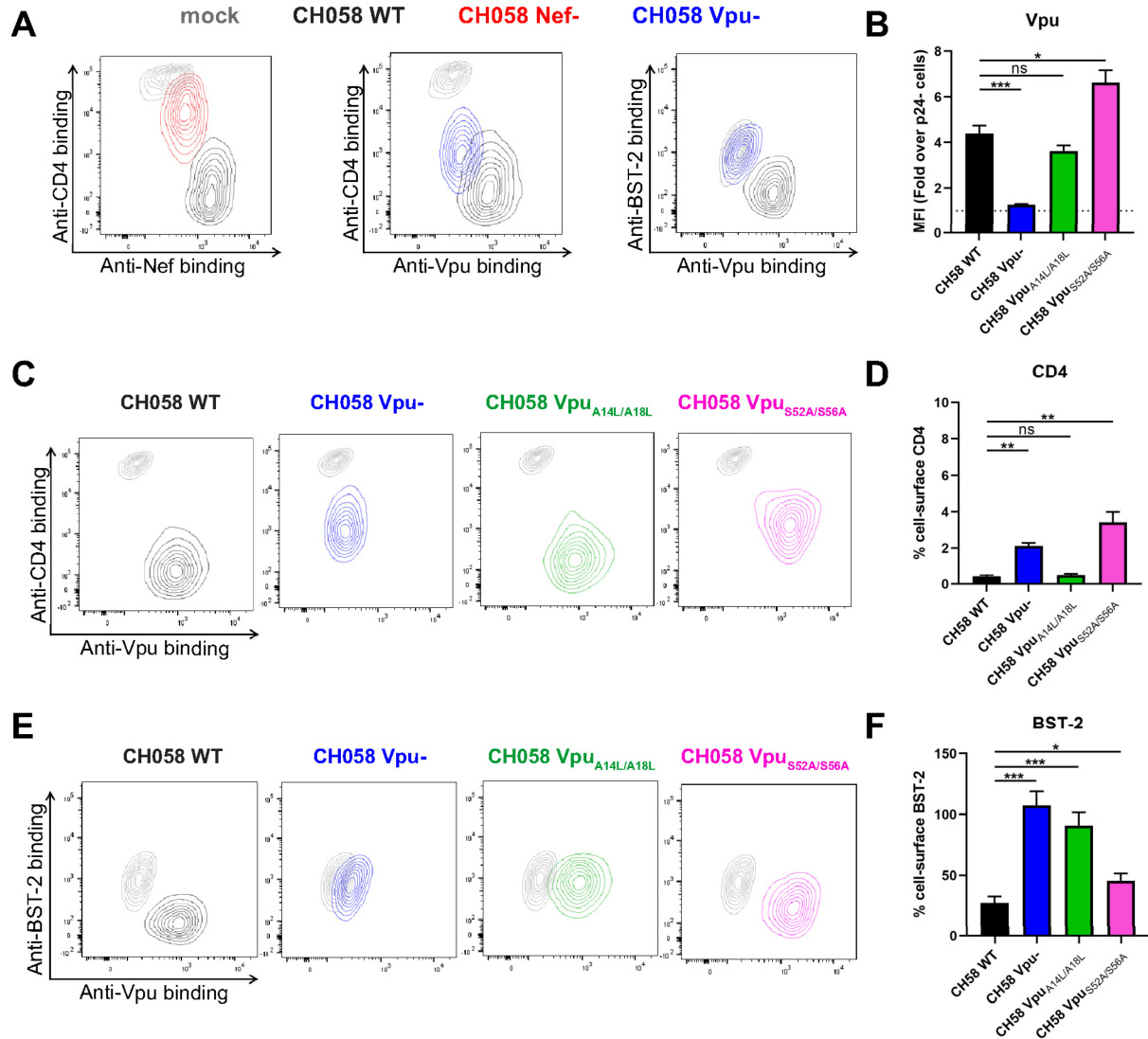
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### 3.4.10 FIGURES



**Figure 3.3.1 - Intracellular detection of Nef and Vpu in infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells.**

(A-C) 293T cells transfected with an empty vector or a plasmid-expressing either CH058 Nef or CH058 Vpu. 48 hours post-transfection, cells were permeabilized and stained with rabbit polyclonal antisera raised against Nef and Vpu to detect their respective intracellular expression. Antiserum binding was detected using donkey anti-rabbit BV421 secondary Abs. (A) Histograms depicting representative staining and (B-C) Median fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained for multiple independent stainings using (B) anti-Nef or (C) anti-Vpu. (D-G) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells mock-infected or infected with CH058 T/F WT, Nef-or Vpu-, were stained to detect the intracellular expression of Nef or Vpu. (D,F) Dot plots (left) and histograms (right) depicting representative (D) Nef and (F) Vpu staining. (E,G) The graphs show the MFI obtained from different cell populations using cells from five different donors using (E) anti-Nef or (G) anti-Vpu. Error bars indicate means  $\pm$  standard errors of the means (SEM). Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test or a Mann-Whitney U test based on statistical normality (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; ns, nonsignificant). (H-I) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with a panel of viruses from different clades (A1, B, C, CRF01\_AE), group (M, O) and host (HIV-1, SIVcpz, SHIV). The radar plots indicate the level of specific recognition of infected cells (MFI normalized to uninfected cells) using the (H) anti-Nef or (I) anti-Vpu antisera. The limit of detection was determined using (H) cells infected with CH058 Nef-for Nef staining and using (I) cells infected with CH058 Vpu-for Vpu staining.



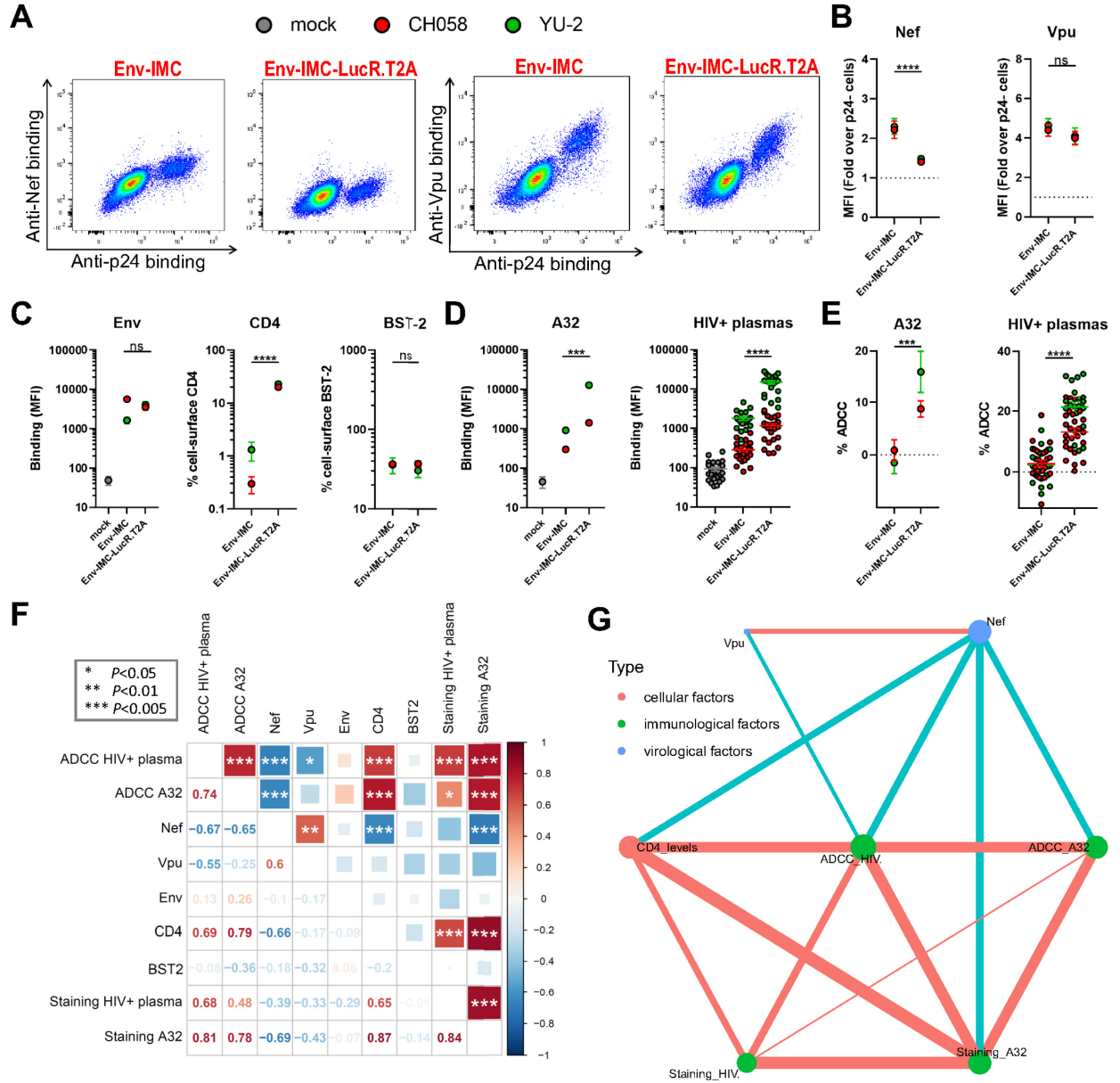
**Figure 3.3.2 - Concomitant detection of intracellular Nef and Vpu and cell-surface CD4 and BST-2.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with CH058T/F WT, Nef-, Vpu-, Vpu A14L/A18L or Vpu S52A/S56A viruses were stained for cell-surface CD4 and BST-2 prior to detection of intracellular Nef or Vpu expression. (A,C,E) Contour plots depicting representative cell-surface CD4 or BST-2 detection in combination with Nef or Vpu intracellular detection. Mock-infected cells were used as a control and are shown in grey. (B,D,F) The graphs show the results obtained from five independent experiments. CD4 and BST-2 levels were reported as a percentage of detection at the surface of infected p24<sup>+</sup> cells compared to uninfected p24<sup>-</sup> cells. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means (SEM). Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test or a Mann-Whitney U test based on statistical normality (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; ns, nonsignificant).



**Figure 3.3.3 - Nef and Vpu intracellular detection inversely correlates with the recognition of infected cells and their susceptibility to ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma.**

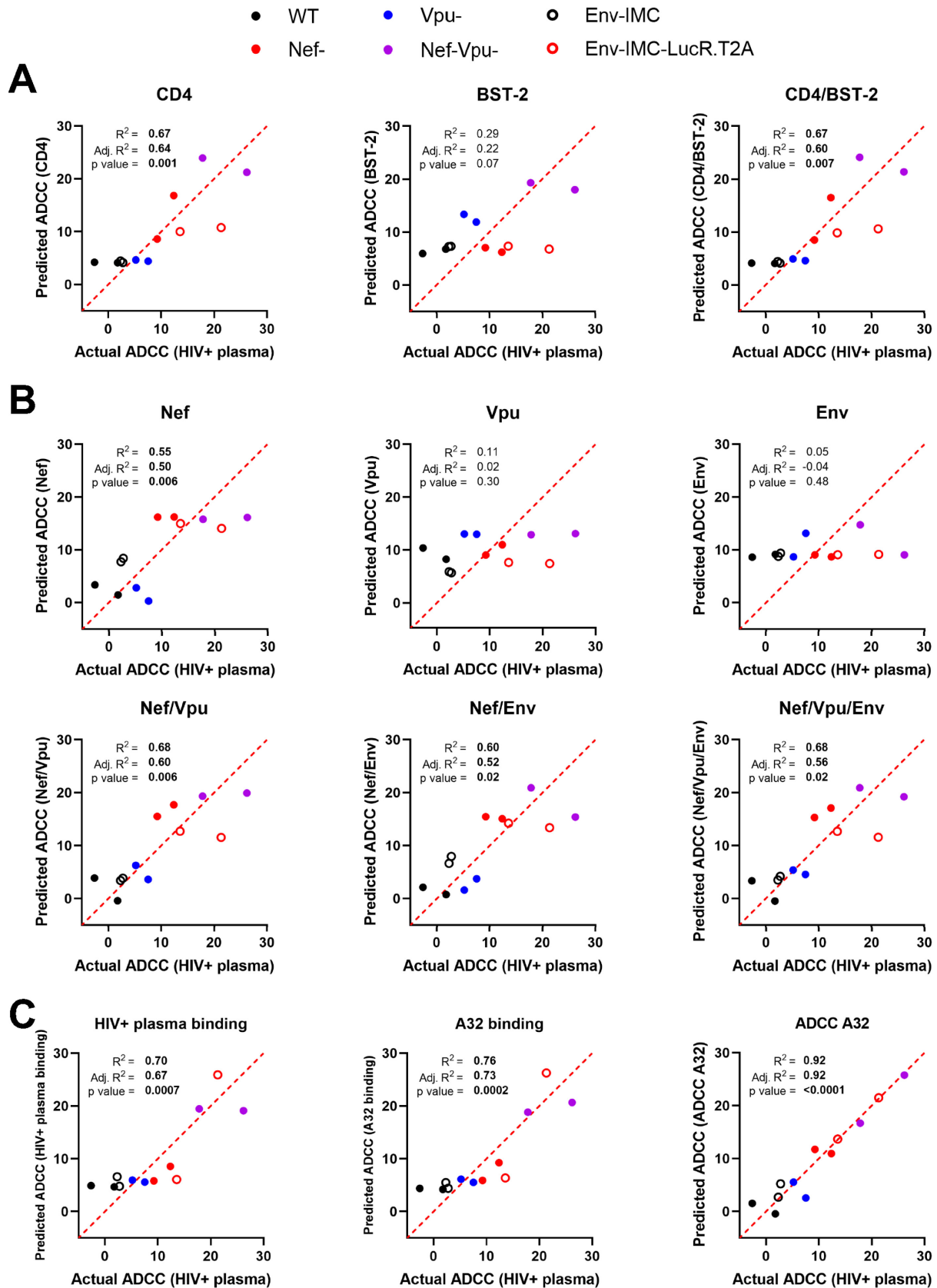
(**A and B**) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were mock-infected (gray) or infected with CH058 T/F (red) or JR-FL (blue) viruses (WT, Nef<sup>-</sup>, Vpu<sup>-</sup>, Nef<sup>-</sup> Vpu<sup>-</sup>), and stained for (A) intracellular Nef or Vpu expression in combination with (B) cell-surface staining of Env (using the anti-Env 2G12 mAb), CD4, and BST-2. (**C and D**) The ability of the anti-Env A32 mAb and 25 different HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma samples to (C) recognize infected cells and (D) eliminate infected cells by ADCC was also measured. (**A to D**) The graphs show the MFI obtained on the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) cell population using cells from five different donors. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means (SEM). Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test or a Mann-Whitney U test based on statistical normality (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; ns, nonsignificant). (**E**) Correlograms summarize pairwise correlations among all immunological, virological, and cellular variables obtained from infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells (shown in panels **A to D**). Squares are color-coded according to the magnitude of the correlation coefficient (r), and the square dimensions are inversely proportional with the P values. Red squares represent a positive correlation between two variables, and blue squares represent negative correlations. Asterisks indicate all statistically significant correlations (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.005). Correlation analysis was done using nonparametric Spearman rank tests. (**F**) Correlation networks were generated using data shown in panel E. Each node (circle) represents a cellular (red), an immunological (green), or a virological (blue) feature measured on infected cells. Nodes are connected with edges (lines) if they are significantly correlated (P < 0.05); nodes without edges were removed. Edges are weighted according to P values (inversely). Red edges represent a positive correlation between two variables, and blue edges represent negative correlations. Nodes are sized according to the r values of connecting edges.





**Figure 3.3.4 - Lack of Nef expression in primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with LucR.T2A IMC results in enhanced ADCC.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells mock-infected (gray) or infected with chimeric IMCs expressing CH058 Env (red) or YU-2 Env (green) and expressing or not the LucR reporter gene. **(A)** Dot plots depicting representative stainings of intracellular Nef or Vpu expression. **(B and C)** Detection by flow cytometry of **(B)** intracellular Nef or Vpu expression in combination with **(C)** cell-surface staining of Env (using anti-Env mAbs 2G12 (CH058) or PGT135 (YU-2)), CD4, and BST-2. **(D and E)** The ability of the A32 mAb and 25 HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma to **(D)** recognize infected cells and **(E)** eliminate infected cells by ADCC was also measured. **(B to E)** The graphs show the MFI obtained on the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) cell population using cells from five different donors. Error bars indicate the means  $\pm$  standard errors of the means (SEM). Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test or a Mann-Whitney U test based on statistical normality (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; ns, nonsignificant). **(F)** Correlograms summarize pairwise correlations among all immunological, virological, and cellular variables obtained from infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells (shown in panels **B to E**). Squares are color-coded according to the magnitude of the correlation coefficient ( $r$ ), and the square dimensions are inversely proportional with the  $P$  values. Red squares represent a positive correlation between two variables, and blue squares represent negative correlations. Asterisks indicate all statistically significant correlations (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.005$ ). Correlation analysis was done using non-parametric Spearman rank tests. **(G)** Correlation networks were generated using data shown in panel **F**. Each node (circle) represents a cellular (red), an immunological (green), or a virological (blue) feature measured on infected cells. Nodes are connected with edges (lines) if they are significantly correlated ( $P < 0.05$ ); nodes without edges were removed. Edges are weighted according to  $P$  values (inversely). Red edges represent a positive correlation between two variables, and blue edges represent negative correlations. Nodes are sized according to the  $r$  values of connecting edges.



**Figure 3.3.5 - Prediction of ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma using multiple linear regression models.**

Multiple linear regression analysis to identify variables that can predict the ADCC responses mediated by HIV1 plasma against primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected by different viral constructs (WT, Nef<sup>-</sup>, Vpu<sup>-</sup>, Nef-Vpu<sup>-</sup>, Env-IMC, Env-IMC-LucR.T2A) from different HIV-1 strains (CH058, JR-FL, YU-2). Each dot represents a single virus where the average of ADCC obtained with 25 different HIV1 plasma samples (dependent variable) is plotted on the x axis and the predicted ADCC value based on one or more independent parameters is plotted on the y axis. **(A to C)** Predictors include **(A)** cellular variables, **(B)** virological variables, and **(C)** immunological variables. Multiple linear regression analyses were performed using the GraphPad Prism software (v 9.1.0). P values below 0.05 are considered significant and are highlighted in bold. The coefficient of multiple correlation ( $R^2$ ) indicates the goodness of fit of the multiple regression linear model. The adjusted  $R^2$  (Adj.  $R^2$ ) is used to compare the fits of models across experiments with different numbers of data points and independent variables.

## **CHAPITRE IV - RÔLE DE LA CONFORMATION D'ENV DANS LA RÉPONSE ADCC**

## 4.1 Préambule

Dans ce chapitre, nous décrivons que la régulation négative de CD4 par les protéines Nef et Vpu n'est pas suffisante pour protéger les cellules infectées de la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs. En fait, le facteur déterminant dictant la liaison des nnAbs est la conformation adoptée par Env à la surface de la cellule, et bien que celle-ci puisse être modulée par son interaction avec CD4, elle peut également varier de manière spontanée. Chez les isolats primaires du VIH-1, le trimère d'Env non-liée est maintenu dans un état « fermée » métastable de haute énergie qui peut transitionner vers des conformations « ouvertes » de plus basse énergie de manière dynamique. Nous avons caractérisé plusieurs domaines structuraux qui agissent de concert afin de limiter l'adoption de la conformation « ouverte » de manière spontanée, protégeant ainsi les cellules infectées de l'ADCC médiée par les nnAbs. Dans l'**article 5**, nous avons étudié un résidu conservé du domaine d'association du trimère (L193), qui contribue à stabiliser la conformation « fermée » en gardant les boucles V1/V2 ancrées à l'apex du trimère d'Env. La mutation de ce résidu permet d'augmenter la propension d'Env à adopter sa conformation « ouverte », ce qui se traduit par une augmentation de la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à être éliminées par la réponse ADCC médiée par le sérum VIH<sup>+</sup>. Dans l'**article 6**, nous avons étudié l'impact du clivage protéolytique du précurseur d'Env sur l'évasion des nnAbs. L'absence de clivage rend l'Env plus flexible et plus disposée à adopter la conformation « ouverte », rendant les cellules infectées plus susceptibles aux activités effectrices Fc-dépendantes des nnAbs présents dans le sérum VIH<sup>+</sup>. Cette flexibilité peut être exploitée grâce des petites molécules ciblant la cavité Phe43 afin de favoriser soit la conformation « ouverte » ou « fermée », ceci ayant pour effet d'augmenter ou de bloquer l'ADCC médiée par les nnAbs, respectivement. Dans l'**article 7**, nous avons étudié un résidu de la cavité Phe43 (S375), une structure critique pour l'interaction avec CD4 et qui sert de point de contrôle important dans le déclenchement des changements de conformation d'Env. La substitution de ce petit résidu par de larges résidus hydrophobes permet de « remplir » la cavité Phe43, prédisposant Env à adopter spontanément la conformation « ouverte » et augmentant la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs. Le résidu S375 est conservé dans la majorité des souches du VIH-1 du groupe M en circulation, à l'exception du clade CRF01\_AE qui possède naturellement une histidine à cette position. Cette souche est prédominante en Thaïlande, là où l'essai vaccinal RV144 a eu lieu, ce qui pourrait expliquer pourquoi les corrélats de protection de cette étude incluaient la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs.

## **ARTICLE 5**

**Les glycoprotéines d'enveloppe adoptant les conformations 2 et 3 sont plus susceptibles à la réponse ADCC médiée par le sérum d'individus infectés**

***Envelope Glycoproteins Sampling States 2/3 are Susceptible to ADCC by Sera from HIV-1-Infected Individuals***

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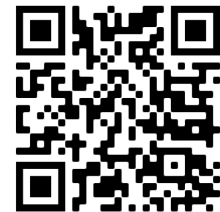
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### 4.2.1 RÉSUMÉ

Une analyse récente de la dynamique des glycoprotéines d'enveloppe (Env) du VIH-1 a montré que le trimère d'Env non-lié peut potentiellement adopter trois conformations : la conformation "fermée" métastable (conformation 1), la conformation "ouverte" liée aux CD4 (conformation 3) et une conformation intermédiaire "partiellement ouverte" (conformation 2). Le VIH-1 a développé plusieurs mécanismes pour éviter l'ouverture d'Env afin d'échapper aux réponses immunitaires telles que la réponse cytotoxique cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCC), qui cible de préférence Env dans la conformation liée à CD4 à la surface des cellules infectées. Nous avons profité d'une mutation bien caractérisée dans le domaine d'association du trimère de la gp120 pour modifier la conformation d'Env et évaluer son impact sur la réponse ADCC. Nous avons constaté que les cellules infectées par des virus exprimant Env stabilisée dans les conformations 2/3 deviennent très sensibles à la réponse ADCC médiée par les sérums d'individus infectés par le VIH-1. Nos résultats indiquent que la conformation adoptée spontanément par le trimère d'Env à la surface des cellules infectées a un impact significatif sur la réponse ADCC.

### 4.2.2 ABSTRACT

Recent analysis of HIV-1 envelope glycoproteins (Env) dynamics showed that the unliganded Env trimer can potentially sample three conformations: a metastable "closed" conformation (State 1), an "open" CD4-bound conformation (State 3), and an intermediate "partially open" conformation (State 2). HIV-1 evolved several mechanisms to avoid "opening" its Env in order to evade immune responses such as antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC), which preferentially targets Envs in the CD4-bound conformation on the surface of infected cells. Here we took advantage of a well-characterized single-residue change in the gp120 trimer association domain to modify Env conformation and evaluate its impact on ADCC responses. We found that cells infected with viruses expressing Env stabilized in States 2/3 become highly susceptible to ADCC responses by sera from HIV-1-infected individuals. Our results indicate that the conformations spontaneously sampled by the Env trimer at the surface of infected cells has a significant impact on ADCC responses.



### 4.2.3 INTRODUCTION

The entry of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV-1) into the host cell is mediated by the viral envelope glycoproteins (Envs), which are derived by proteolytic cleavage of a trimeric gp160 Env precursor ([Allan et al., 1985](#); [Robey et al., 1985](#); [Wyatt and Sodroski, 1998](#)). The mature Env complex is composed of three gp120 surface subunits and three gp41 transmembrane subunits. Env is a metastable molecule which transits from its unliganded “closed” high energy conformation (State 1) to an “open” CD4-bound low energy conformation (State 3). CD4 engagement drives Env into an intermediate “partially open” conformation and then into State 3, a pre-hairpin intermediate conformation ([Herschhorn et al., 2016](#); [Munro et al., 2014](#)). CCR5 or CXCR4 coreceptor interaction with the gp120 promotes additional conformational changes in gp41 resulting in the formation of a six-helix bundle formed by HR1 and HR2 heptad repeats resulting in the fusion of viral and cellular membranes ([Chan et al., 1997](#); [Lu et al., 1995](#); [Weissenhorn et al., 1997](#)). Env represents the only virus-specific antigen exposed at the surface of infected cells and thus is a major target for antibody-mediated immune responses, including antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC). The unliganded Env of most primary HIV-1 isolates assumes a “closed” State 1 conformation ([Julien et al., 2013](#); [Liu et al., 2008](#); [Lyumkis et al., 2013](#); [Mao et al., 2012](#); [Munro et al., 2014](#); [Pancera et al., 2014](#); [White et al., 2010](#)), which renders the trimer relatively resistant to antibody attack. Env interaction with CD4 ([Veillette et al., 2015, 2014b](#)), large alterations in the Phe43 cavity ([Prevost et al., 2017](#)) and small CD4-mimetics (CD4mc) ([Richard et al., 2016a, 2015](#)) have been shown to trigger Env to sample downstream conformations and render HIV-1-infected cells susceptible to ADCC responses. Thus, downstream conformations from State 1 appear to be preferentially recognized by ADCC-mediating antibodies that are present in the sera of HIV-1-infected individuals ([Veillette et al., 2015](#)). In order to limit the recognition of Env at the surface of infected cells, HIV-1 has evolved sophisticated mechanisms to efficiently internalize Env ([von Bredow et al., 2015](#)), to counteract the host restriction factor BST-2 with the viral Vpu protein ([Alvarez et al., 2014](#); [Arias et al., 2014](#); [Veillette et al., 2014b](#)), and to downregulate CD4 using Nef and Vpu ([Veillette et al., 2015, 2014b](#)). Moreover, multiple intermolecular interactions within the Env trimer contribute to the maintenance of this relatively “antibody-resistant” State 1 conformation, including the gp120  $\beta 20$ – $\beta 21$  element and the V1V2 and V3 variable loops ([Herschhorn et al., 2017, 2016](#); [Kwon et al., 2012](#)). For example, mutation of “restraining” residues within V1V2 were shown to enable Env to

spontaneously sample lower energy State 2 and 3 conformations. These Env variants were reported to be more susceptible to neutralization by State 2/3-preferring ligands such as soluble CD4 (sCD4), small CD4 mimetics (CD4mc) and CD4-induced (CD4i) antibodies ([Herschhorn et al., 2016](#)). However, their impact on ADCC responses remains unknown. Here we tested the influence of a V2 State 2/3-stabilizing Env mutation, L193A, on ADCC responses mediated by sera from HIV-1-infected individuals.

#### **4.2.4 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

##### **Cell lines and isolation of primary cells**

293T human embryonic kidney (obtained from ATCC, Cat# CRL-3216, RRID: CVCL 0063), and primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were grown as previously described ([Richard et al., 2010](#); [Veillette et al., 2014b](#)). CD4<sup>+</sup> T lymphocytes were purified from resting PBMCs by negative selection and activated as previously described ([Richard et al., 2015](#)). Research adhered to the ethical guidelines of CRCHUM and was reviewed and approved by the CRCHUM institutional review board (ethics committee). Research adhered to the standards indicated by the Declaration of Helsinki.

##### **Viral production and infections**

In order to achieve the same level of infection among the different mutants tested, vesicular stomatitis virus G (VSVG)-pseudotyped HIV-1 viruses were produced and titrated as described ([Veillette et al., 2015](#)). Viruses were used to infect primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from healthy HIV-negative donors by spin infection at 800 × g for 1 h in 96-well plates at 25 °C. Under these conditions we obtained equivalent levels of infection for all viruses tested.

##### **Antibodies and sera**

The following antibodies were used to assess Env cell-surface staining: conformation-independent anti-gp120 outer-domain 2G12 (NIH AIDS Reagent Program), State 1- preferring anti-gp120 antibodies VRC03 (NIH AIDS Reagent Program), PGT151 (IAVI) and PG9 (Polymun), State 2/3-preferring anti-gp120 antibodies 17b, 19b, A32, F105 and anti-gp41 antibodies 7B2 and F240 (NIH AIDS Reagent Program). The monoclonal antibody anti-CD4

OKT4 (BioLegend) binds to the D3 domain of CD4 and was used to measure cell-surface levels of CD4, as described ([Veillette et al., 2014b](#)). Secondary antibodies goat anti-mouse and anti-human coupled to Alexa Fluor 647 (Invitrogen) were used in flow cytometry experiments. Sera from HIV-infected and healthy donors were collected, heat-inactivated and conserved at  $-80^{\circ}\text{C}$  until use. Written Informed consent was obtained from all study participants (the Montreal Primary HIV Infection Cohort ([Fontaine et al., 2011, 2009](#)) and the Canadian Cohort of HIV Infected Slow Progressors ([International et al., 2010; Kanya et al., 2011; Peretz et al., 2007](#))). A random number generator (GraphPad, QuickCalcs) was used to randomly select a number of sera for each experiment.

### **Plasmids**

The plasmid encoding the HIV-1 transmitted founder (TF) infectious molecular clone (IMC) CH58 and CH77 were previously described ([Bar et al., 2012; Fenton-May et al., 2013; Ochsenbauer et al., 2012; Parrish et al., 2013; Richard et al., 2015](#)). Individual Env mutations were introduced using the QuikChange II XL site-directed mutagenesis protocol (Stratagene) and verified by sequencing.

### **Flow cytometry analysis of cell-surface staining**

Using the standard calcium phosphate method,  $7\ \mu\text{g}$  of each IMC was transfected into  $2 \times 10^6$  293T cells. At 48 h post transfection, 293T cells were stained with anti-Env antibodies ( $5\ \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ) followed by intracellular p24 staining (PE-anti-p24, clone KC57; Beckman Coulter/Immuntotech, Hialeah, FL; 1:100 final dilution), to identify transfected cells. Alternatively, to evaluate soluble CD4 (sCD4) binding to the different Envs expressed at the cell surface, transfected 293T cells were incubated with sCD4 ( $5\ \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ), followed with a staining by the monoclonal anti-CD4 OKT4 antibody.

Cell-surface staining of primary  $\text{CD4}^+$  T cells was performed as previously described ([Richard et al., 2015; Veillette et al., 2015](#)). MFI histograms show signal on live infected populations. Binding of HIV-1-infected cells by  $\text{HIV}^+$  sera (1:1000 dilution) or anti-Env mAbs ( $5\ \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ) were performed 48 h after infection. The percentage of infected cells ( $\text{p24}^+$  cells) was determined by gating the living cell population based on viability dye staining (Aqua Vivid,

Thermo Fisher Scientific, Cat# L43957). Samples were analyzed on an LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences, Mississauga, ON, Canada) and data analysis was performed using FlowJo v10.0.7 (Tree Star, Ashland, OR, USA).

### **ADCC responses**

Measurement of ADCC-mediated killing was performed with a previously described assay ([Richard et al., 2015](#)). Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells isolated from five healthy HIV-negative donors were infected for 48 h with the different IMCs. In order to avoid the potential bias induced by the presence of gp120-coated uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells in ADCC measurements ([Richard et al., 2016b](#)), CD4<sup>high</sup> T cells were removed from the target cell population using Dynabeads® CD4<sup>+</sup> positive selection kit (Invitrogen) at a ratio of 25 µl of beads per million cells. Of note, these beads do not distinguish between p24<sup>+</sup> and p24<sup>-</sup> cells. Their capacity to enrich CD4<sup>low</sup> cells is based in their ability to select for CD4<sup>high</sup> cells. Negative selection of CD4<sup>low</sup> T cells was assessed by double staining with anti-CD4 OKT4 mAb and anti-p24 mAb (KC57, Beckman Coulter). Productively-infected primary CD4 T cells (CD4<sup>low</sup>, p24<sup>+</sup>) were incubated with autologous PBMC in presence of HIV<sup>+</sup> or HIV<sup>-</sup> sera (1:1000) for 5 h at 37 °C. Cytometry beads were used to normalize the number of productively-infected cells left after the ADCC reaction, as described ([Richard et al., 2014](#), [2016b](#)). The percentage of cytotoxicity (% ADCC) was calculated with the following formula: (Normalized number of Targets plus Effectors) – (Normalized number of Targets plus Effectors plus serum)/(Normalized number of Targets) by gating infected lived target cells.

### **Immunoprecipitation of envelope glycoproteins**

$3 \times 10^5$  293T cells were transfected by the calcium phosphate method with the different IMCs. One day after transfection, cells were metabolically labeled for 16 h with 100 µCi/mL [<sup>35</sup>S] methionine-cysteine ([<sup>35</sup>S] Protein Labeling Mix; PerkinElmer) in Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium lacking methionine and cysteine and supplemented with 5% dialyzed fetal bovine serum. Cells were subsequently lysed in RIPA buffer (140 mM NaCl, 8 mM Na<sub>2</sub>HPO<sub>4</sub>, 2 mM NaH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, 1% NP40, 0.05% sodium dodecyl sulfate (SDS)). Precipitation of radiolabeled envelope glycoproteins from cell lysates or medium was performed with a mixture of sera from HIV-1-infected individuals in the presence of 50 µl of 10% Protein A-Sepharose (American BioSciences) at 4 °C. The association index is a measure of the ability of the mutant gp120 molecule to remain

associated with the Env trimer complex on the expressing cell, relative to that of the wild-type Env trimers. The association index is calculated as follows: association index = ([mutant gp120] cell × [wildtype gp120] supernatant) / ([mutant gp120] supernatant × [wild-type gp120] cell).

### Statistical analyses

Statistics were analyzed using GraphPad Prism version 6.01 (GraphPad, San Diego, CA, USA). P values < 0.05 were considered significant; significance values are indicated as \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001, \*\*\*\* p < 0.0001.

## 4.2.5 RESULTS

### Effect of L193A on HIV-1 Env conformation.

A recent report identified a series of State 1 restraining residues located in the V1V2 variable regions that when mutated enabled Env to spontaneously sample downstream conformations ([Herschhorn et al., 2016](#)). Based on its marked States 2/3 phenotype, mutation L193A was selected and introduced into primary transmitted/founder (TF) infectious molecular clones (IMCs) CH58 and CH77. These IMCs were chosen because they have been extensively characterized and shown to be resistant to ADCC mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera and anti-cluster A antibodies ([Ding et al., 2016b, 2016c](#); [Richard et al., 2016a, 2017a, 2015a, 2016b](#)). In order to confirm that mutation L193A triggered Env to sample State 2/3 conformations, primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with wild type CH58, CH77 and L193A variants were incubated with a panel of conformational specific ligands and assessed by flow cytometry. Since it has been reported that small amounts of CD4 at the surface of cells are sufficient to affect Env conformation ([Veillette et al., 2014a, 2014b](#)), we first assessed Env conformation using CD4 negative cells (293T). As shown in **Fig. 4.1.1A–B**, State 1-preferring ligands (PG9, VRC03 and PGT151) recognized L193A variants of CH58 and CH77 IMCs less efficiently than the corresponding wild type viruses. This was associated with a significant increase in their recognition by State 2/3-preferring ligands (19b, 17b, 7B2, F240, F105, sCD4, A32). Of note, PG9 did not recognize CH58 Env; VRC03 did not recognize CH77 Env, and therefore were not included for these viruses.

We then evaluated whether the State 2/3-like conformation of L193A variants was maintained at the surface of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, a biologically-relevant model for ADCC responses ([Lewis et al., 2015](#); [Veillette et al., 2016](#)). Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from 3 healthy HIV-1 negative donors were infected with WT CH58 and CH77, and their L193A variants. Env conformation was evaluated with the same panel of ligands described above. Consistent with efficient CD4 down-regulation by Nef and Vpu accessory proteins, productively-infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup>) expressed almost no CD4 at their surface (data not shown). In agreement with Env sampling a “closed” State 1 conformation, Env at the surface of wildtype-infected CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were efficiently recognized by State 1 but not States 2/3- preferring ligands (**Fig. 4.1.1C–D**). In contrast, primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with L193A variants were efficiently recognized by State 2/3- preferring ligands (**Fig. 4.1.1C–D**). Altogether, these results support previous observations indicating that L193A stabilizes Env in a State 2/3-like conformation ([Herschhorn et al., 2016](#)).

#### **Subunit association of L193A variants.**

When performing Env staining at the surface of productively-infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, we observed a decreased signal for L193A variants when using the conformationally independent anti-gp120 outer domain 2G12 antibody (**Fig. 4.1.2A–B**) ([Veillette et al., 2015](#), [2014a](#), [2014b](#)). Since decreased Env detection at the surface of HIV-1-infected cells could be explained by enhanced gp120 shedding, we decided to directly examine whether introduction of the L193A mutation results in such a phenotype. Briefly, 293T cells were transfected with wild-type CH58 and CH77, and their L193A variants. Transfected cells were metabolically-labeled 24 h later and released and cell-associated gp120 molecules were quantified after immunoprecipitation from medium and cell lysates, as described ([Ding et al., 2016a](#); [Finzi et al., 2010](#)). Introduction of the L193A mutation resulted in a significant increase in gp120 shedding in both IMCs (**Fig. 4.1.2C–F**), suggesting decreased trimer stability. These results are consistent with a role of the V1V2 variable regions in maintaining trimer stability ([Herschhorn et al., 2016](#); [Medjahed et al., 2013](#)).

#### **Impact of the L193A mutation on ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera.**

We then evaluated whether introduction of L193A into CH58 and CH77 IMCs affected Env recognition and ADCC responses mediated by sera from HIV-1 infected individuals. Primary

CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells isolated from 5 HIV-1 negative donors were infected with wild-type and L193A mutant CH58 and CH77 viruses. Two days post-infection cells were stained with sera from 10 HIV-1-infected individuals or 5 healthy HIV-1-negative individuals. In agreement with Env being stabilized in a State 2/3 conformation, infected cells expressing the L193A variants were more efficiently detected by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera tested than their WT counterparts (**Fig. 4.1.3**). As expected, sera from HIV-1 negative donors did not bind to HIV-1- infected cells (not shown). We next evaluated whether enhanced recognition of HIV-1- infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera translated into increased susceptibility to ADCC responses. However, since L193A induces gp120 shedding (**Fig. 4.1.2**) and this shed gp120 affects ADCC measurements by binding to uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells ([Richard et al., 2016b](#)), we decided to modify a previously-described FACS-based ADCC assay ([Richard et al., 2014, 2015](#)). Briefly, primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with the different IMCs for 48 h. Uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were removed using beads coated with an anti-CD4 antibody which does not compete for gp120 binding (**Fig. 4.1.4A–D**). As shown in **Fig. 4.1.4**, CD4<sup>high</sup> T cell depletion removed more than 90% of uninfected CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells (p24<sup>-</sup> CD4<sup>+</sup>) (**Fig. 4.1.4** and not shown), leaving the vast majority of productively-infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>-</sup>). Enriched productively-infected cells were then used to assess ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. In agreement with poor recognition of wild-type Envs by State 2/3-preferring ligands (**Fig. 4.1.1**) and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 4.1.3**), we observed low ADCC activity against cells infected with wild-type viruses (**Fig. 4.1.4E–F**). In contrast, infected cells expressing the L193A variant were significantly more susceptible to ADCC responses, indicating that Env State 2/3 conformations are more susceptible to ADCC mediated by antibodies present in HIV<sup>+</sup> sera.

#### 4.2.6 DISCUSSION

The unliganded HIV-1 Env trimer can potentially sample three conformations: a metastable “closed” conformation (State 1), an “open” CD4-bound conformation (State 3), and an intermediate “partially open” conformation (State 2) ([Herschhorn et al., 2016](#); [Munro et al., 2014](#)). Along with extensive glycosylation and a variable protein surface, Env conformational flexibility contributes to the ability of HIV-1 to evade the host’s antibody response. Recent evidence suggests that HIV-1 developed additional mechanisms to avoid “opening” the Env which otherwise results in the exposure of vulnerable epitopes. Recognition of these conserved epitopes by host-elicited antibodies not only results in viral neutralization but also in the elimination of HIV-1 infected cells

by Fc-mediated effector functions ([Lewis et al., 2017](#); [Madani et al., 2016](#); [Richard et al., 2016a, 2017a, 2015](#); [Tolbert et al., 2017](#); [Veillette et al., 2015, 2014b](#)). HIV-1 restrains its envelope glycoproteins from sampling downstream conformation and exposing these epitopes by downregulating the CD4 receptor from the surface of the cell ([Veillette et al., 2015, 2014b](#)), by keeping small residues in its Env Phe43 cavity ([Prevost et al., 2017](#)) and by maintaining multiple intramolecular and intermolecular interactions within the Env trimer ([Bradley et al., 2016](#); [Cimbro et al., 2016](#); [Duenas-Decamp et al., 2016](#); [Herschhorn et al., 2016](#); [Kwon et al., 2012](#); [O'Rourke et al., 2012](#)). A recent mutagenesis study showed that subtle losses of key molecular contacts resulting from single-residue changes in the gp120 trimer association domain release Env to assume one or more intermediate states ([Herschhorn et al., 2016](#)). We took advantage of the detailed conformational dynamic characterization by single-molecule Fluorescence Resonance Energy Transfer (smFRET) of the L193A mutation ([Herschhorn et al., 2016](#)) to explore the sensitivity of these intermediate states to ADCC responses. This mutant was shown to spontaneously sample a State 2/3-like conformation and was reported to be more susceptible to neutralization by State 2/3-preferring ligands, including sCD4, CD4mc and CD4i antibodies. In agreement with these results, we found that introduction of the L193A mutation in two primary IMCs resulted in Env sampling intermediate State 2/3 conformations at the surface of infected cells based on their efficient recognition by a panel of State 2/3-recognizing ligands. This was accompanied with a significant increase in gp120 shedding, suggesting that Env States 2/3 are overall less stable, which is consistent with a role of the V1V2 variable regions in maintaining trimer stability ([Medjahed et al., 2013](#)). Since binding of shed gp120 to uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells can affect in vitro measurements of ADCC activity ([Richard et al., 2016b](#)), we decided to modify a previously-described FACS-based ADCC assay ([Richard et al., 2014, 2015](#)) by removing p24<sup>-</sup> CD4<sup>high</sup> cells. This was necessary because the presence of uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells (p24<sup>-</sup> CD4<sup>high</sup>), which are coated with gp120 shed from productively infected cells ([Richard et al., 2016b](#)), induces a strong bias by exposing CD4i epitopes that are normally occluded in productively-infected cells and therefore overestimate the ADCC activity of CD4i antibodies present in sera from HIV-1-infected individuals. By removing these cells, we obtained an homogenous population of productively-infected, p24<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>low</sup>, cells. Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with wild-type CH58 and CH77 were resistant to ADCC mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. This is consistent with the recognition of these infected cells by State 1-preferring ligands and the



concomitant occlusion of CD4i epitopes in primary Envs ([Ding et al., 2016b](#); [Richard et al., 2015](#); [Veillette et al., 2015, 2014b](#); [von Bredow et al., 2016](#)). In marked contrast, infected cells expressing the L193A variant were significantly more susceptible to ADCC responses mediated by sera from several HIV-1-infected individuals. Altogether, our results indicate that the conformation spontaneously sampled by Env at the surface of infected cells has a significant impact on ADCC responses. This information might be useful in understanding the role of ADCC responses in HIV-1 transmission in animal studies.

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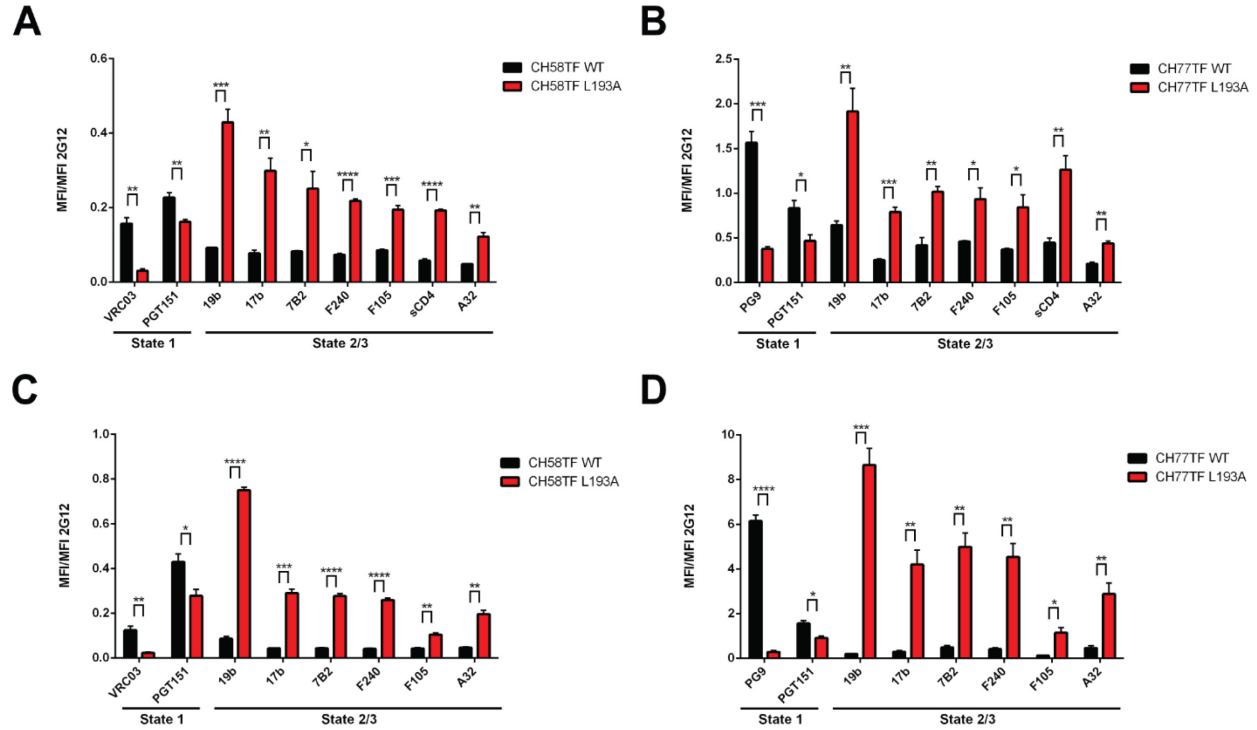
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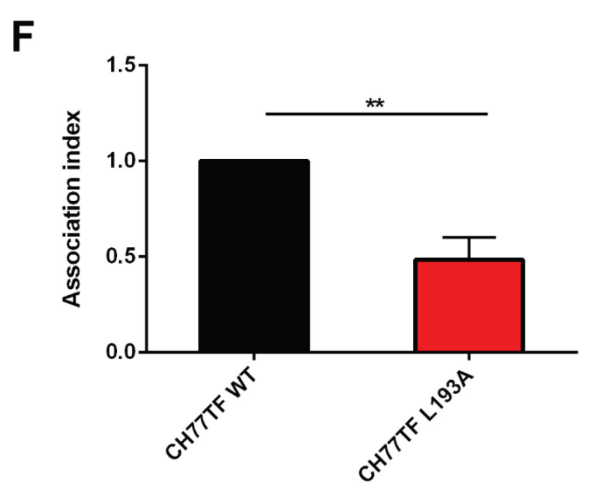
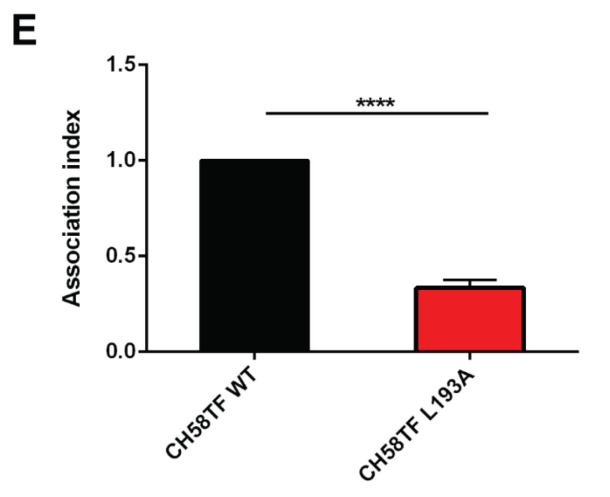
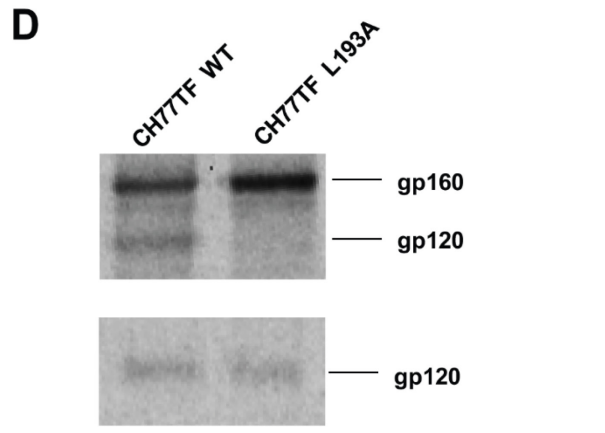
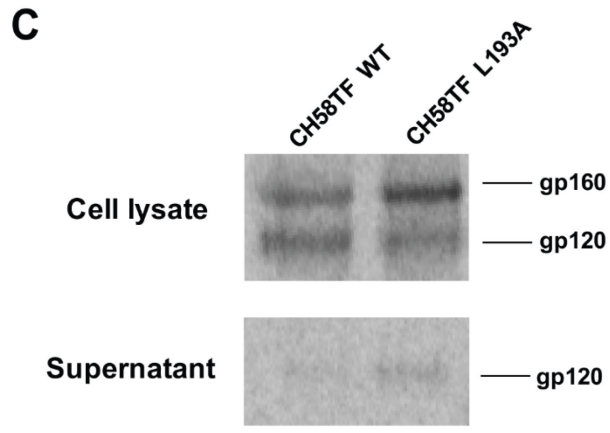
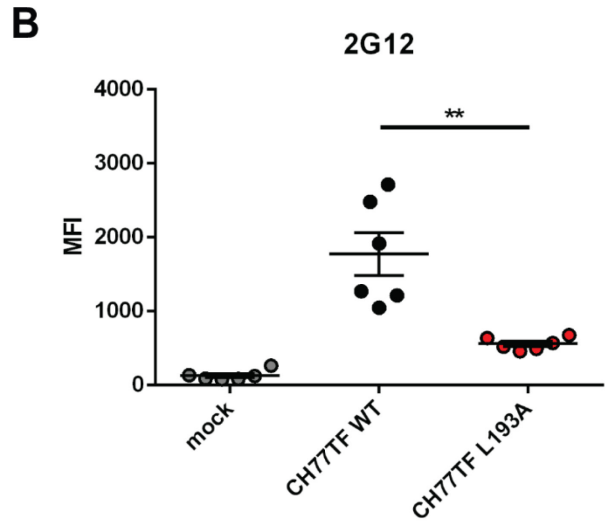
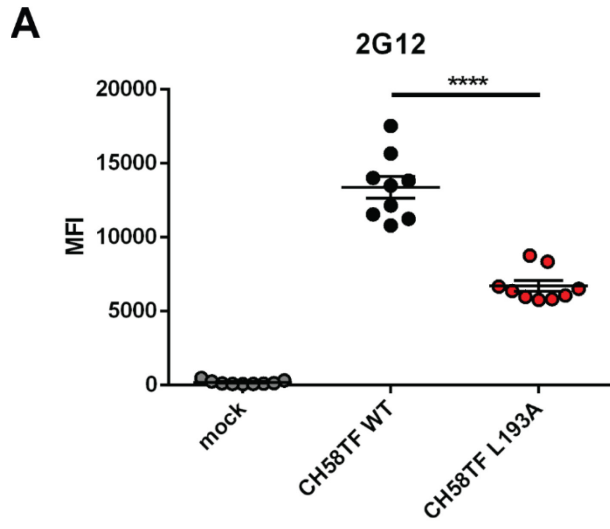


## 4.2.9 FIGURES



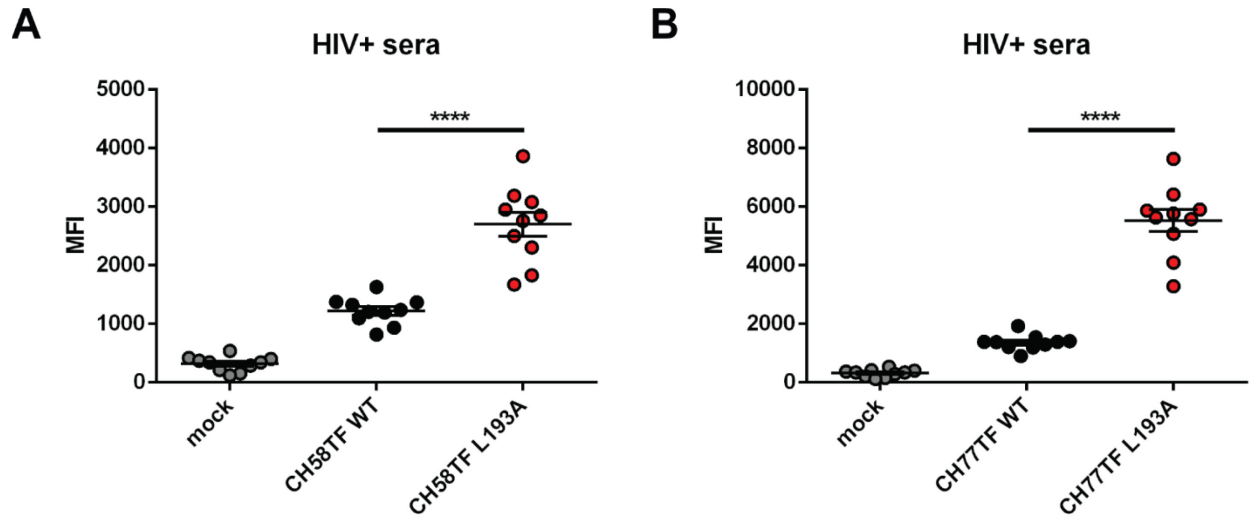
**Figure 4.1.1 - HIV-1 Env L193A variant is stabilized in a State 2/3-like conformation.**

Cell-surface staining of 293T transfected cells (A, B) or primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected (C, D) with transmitted-founder IMCs CH58 and CH77 WT or L193A variants using State 1-preferring antibodies (VRC03, PGT151, PG9) or State 2/3-preferring antibodies (19b, 17b, 7B2, F240, F105, A32). Assessment of sCD4 binding (followed by anti-CD4 OKT4 mAb staining) was performed in 293T cells only. Shown are the mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained in the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) population for staining obtained in at least 3 independent experiments. Error bars indicate mean  $\pm$  SEM. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired two-tailed t-test (\*,  $P < 0.05$ , \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ , \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ , \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ).



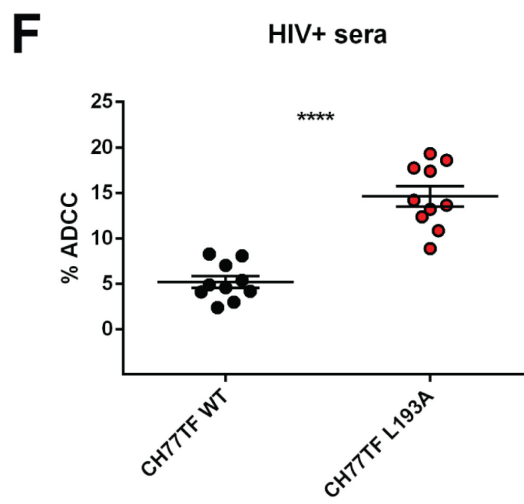
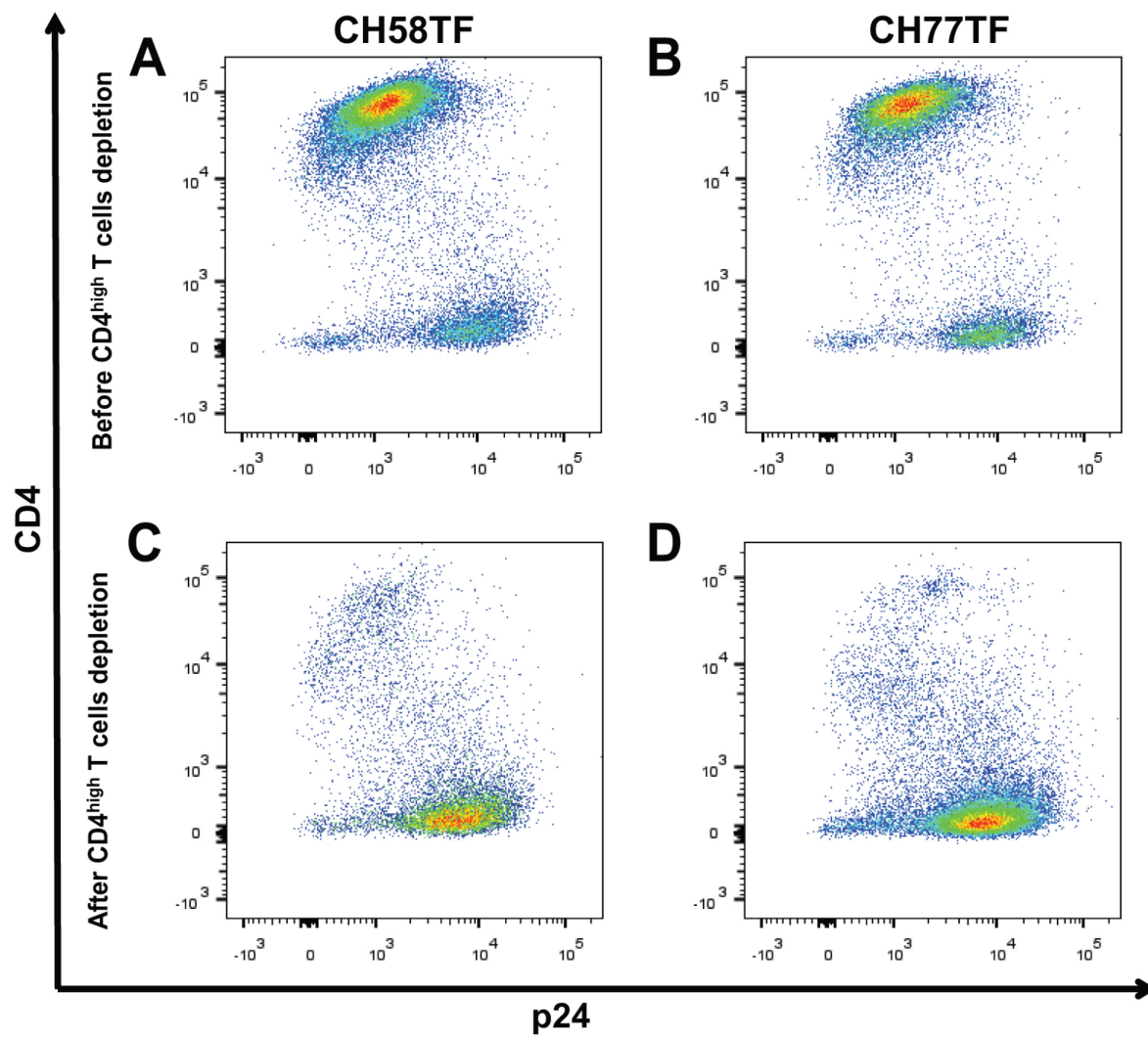
**Figure 4.1.2 - Introduction of the L193A change induces gp120 shedding.**

Cell-surface staining of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, either mock-infected or infected with transmitted-founder IMCs CH58, CH77 WT or L193A variants, with the conformation-independent anti-gp120 2G12 mAb (**A, B**). The mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) on infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) cells obtained in at least 6 independent experiments are shown. In order to evaluate the impact of the L193A change on gp120 shedding, 293T cells were transfected with WT or L193A variants and metabolically-labeled with <sup>35</sup>S. Cell lysates and supernatants (**C, D**) were immunoprecipitated with sera from HIV-1-infected patients. The precipitated proteins were loaded onto SDS-PAGE gels and analyzed by autoradiography and densitometry to calculate their association indexes (**E, F**). The association index is a measure of the ability of the mutant gp120 molecule to remain associated with the envelope glycoprotein complex on the expressing cell relative to that of the wild-type envelope glycoproteins. Shown are association indexes calculated in 3 independent experiments. Error bars indicate mean ± SEM. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired two-tailed ttest (\*\*, P < 0.01, \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001).



**Figure 4.1.3 - Recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by sera from HIV-1-infected and uninfected individuals.**

Cell surface staining of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells either mock-infected or infected with transmitted-founder CH58, CH77 WT or L193A variants with sera from 10 HIV-1-infected individuals (**A**, **B**). The mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) when gating in the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) cell population obtained in at least 5 independent experiments are shown. Error bars indicate mean  $\pm$  SEM. Statistical significance was tested using a paired two-tailed t-test (\*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ).



**Figure 4.1.4 - Cells expressing Env stabilized in States 2/3 are more susceptible to ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with transmitted-founder CH58, CH77 WT or L193A variants were stained with anti-CD4 OKT4 mAb before (**A, B**) or after (**C, D**) removal of uninfected bystander CD4<sup>high</sup> cell, as described in material and methods. (**E, F**) Enriched productively-infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>low</sup>) were used as target cells and incubated with autologous PBMC (used as effector cells) in the presence of sera from 10 HIV-1-infected individuals. The percentage of ADCC was calculated as described in material and methods. Results are representative of those obtained in at least 5 independent experiments. Error bars indicate mean  $\pm$  SEM. (**E,F**) statistical significance was tested using a paired two-tailed t-test (\*\*,  $P < 0.01$ , \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ).

## **ARTICLE 6**

**Le clivage protéolytique des glycoprotéines d'enveloppe du VIH-1 protège les  
cellules infectées de la réponse ADCC médiée par le plasma d'individus  
infectés**

***HIV-1 Envelope Glycoproteins Proteolytic Cleavage Protects Infected Cells from ADCC  
Mediated by Plasma from Infected Individuals***

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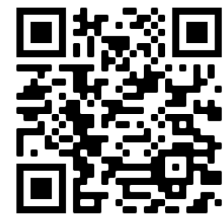
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**Contribution des auteurs:**

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### 4.3.1 RÉSUMÉ

Les glycoprotéines d'enveloppe du VIH-1 (Env) sont synthétisées dans le réticulum endoplasmique sous la forme d'un précurseur trimérique de gp160, qui nécessite le clivage protéolytique par une protéase cellulaire de type furine pour assurer la fusion virus-cellule. L'Env est flexible sur le plan de la conformation, mais contrôle sa transition de la conformation "fermée" non-liée (conformation 1) aux conformations liées à CD4 (conformations 2/3), qui sont nécessaires à la fusion. Entre autres, le VIH-1 a développé plusieurs mécanismes qui réduisent l'ouverture prématurée d'Env, afin d'empêcher l'exposition d'épitopes hautement conservés reconnus par des anticorps non-neutralisants (nnAbs) capables de médier la réponse cytotoxique cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCC). Le clivage d'Env diminue ses transitions conformationnelles favorisant l'adoption de la conformation "fermée". Ici, nous avons modifié le site de clivage de la gp160 par la furine afin d'empêcher le clivage de l'Env et d'examiner son impact sur la réponse ADCC médiée par le plasma d'individus infectés par le VIH-1. Nous avons constaté que les lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> primaires infectés exprimant l'Env non-clivée, mais pas de type sauvage, sont reconnus efficacement par les nnAbs et deviennent très sensibles à la réponse ADCC médiée par le plasma d'individus infectés par le VIH-1. Ainsi, le VIH-1 limite l'exposition de l'Env non-clivée à la surface des cellules infectées, du moins en partie pour échapper à la réponse ADCC.

### 4.3.2 ABSTRACT

The HIV-1 envelope glycoprotein (Env) is synthesized in the endoplasmic reticulum as a trimeric gp160 precursor, which requires proteolytic cleavage by a cellular furin protease to mediate virus-cell fusion. Env is conformationally flexible but controls its transition from the unbound "closed" conformation (State 1) to downstream CD4-bound conformations (States 2/3), which are required for fusion. In particular, HIV-1 has evolved several mechanisms that reduce the premature "opening" of Env which exposes highly conserved epitopes recognized by non-neutralizing antibodies (nnAbs) capable of mediating antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC). Env cleavage decreases its conformational transitions favoring the adoption of the "closed" conformation. Here we altered the gp160 furin cleavage site to impair Env cleavage and to examine its impact on ADCC responses mediated by plasma from HIV-1-infected individuals. We found that infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells expressing uncleaved, but not wildtype, Env are efficiently recognized by nnAbs and become highly susceptible to ADCC responses mediated by

plasma from HIV-1-infected individuals. Thus, HIV-1 limits the exposure of uncleaved Env at the surface of HIV-1-infected cells at least in part to escape ADCC responses.

### 4.3.3 INTRODUCTION

The human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1) envelope glycoprotein (Env) is a class I viral membrane fusion protein which mediates viral entry using the CD4 cellular receptor. The envelope gp160 precursor is synthesized in the endoplasmic reticulum (ER) and oligomerizes as a trimer [1,2]. Subsequently, the trimeric Env traffics through the trans-Golgi network (TGN) to reach the plasma membrane and to be incorporated into nascent HIV-1 virions [3–5]. During its transit through the secretory pathway, Env undergoes important post-translational modifications, including N-linked and O-linked glycosylation as well as proteolytic cleavage [6–10]. The addition of high-mannose oligosaccharides takes place in the ER and these glycans are further processed to acquire complex modifications in the TGN [11]. Concomitantly, proprotein convertases present in the TGN, including furin and furin-like proteases, catalyze the cleavage of the immature gp160 polyprotein [12–15] into two functional non-covalently linked subunits: the exterior gp120 subunit, which is responsible for viral attachment and the transmembrane gp41 subunit, which mediates membrane fusion. The human furin protein is part of the subtilisin-like serine endoprotease family and recognizes polybasic motifs, having Arg-X-Lys/Arg-Arg (RXXK/RR) as a consensus cleavage site [16]. HIV-1 Env possesses a highly conserved furin cleavage site at the gp120-gp41 junction (<sup>508</sup>REKR<sup>511</sup>) which is adjacent to the hydrophobic fusion peptide at the gp41 N-terminus, with furin cleavage being essential for viral infectivity [6,8,17,18]. A putative secondary furin cleavage site (<sup>500</sup>KAKR<sup>503</sup>), located a few residues upstream of the primary cleavage site, has been described but its function remains unclear [17,19].

The functional mature Env trimer is known to sample different conformations ranging from the pre-fusion “closed” metastable conformation (State 1) to the CD4-bound “open” conformation (State 3), transitioning through an intermediate asymmetric conformation (State 2) [20,21]. Env glycoproteins from primary isolates preferentially adopt the State 1 conformation, which is preferentially recognized by broadly neutralizing antibodies (bNAbs) [20,22–24] and can be triggered into downstream conformations by CD4 binding, which exposes highly conserved epitopes targeted by non-neutralizing antibodies (nnAbs) [20,25,26]. These nnAbs are rapidly

elicited upon infection and vaccination [27–32] and mediate potent Fc-effector functions, including antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) [26,33–38]. The binding of Env to CD4 on the surface of HIV-1-infected cells stabilizes Env in State 2A, which is highly susceptible to nnAbs-mediated ADCC [26,39,40]. However, HIV-1 has evolved to prevent the premature adoption of the CD4-bound conformation by downregulating and degrading pre-existing and newly-synthesized CD4 through its accessory proteins Nef and Vpu [26,35,41,42]. Small CD4 mimetic compounds (CD4mc) are being developed to “open up” Env, with the goal of harnessing the potential of nnAbs responses for prevention [31,32,38,43–46] and eradication [36,40,47–53] strategies. Another class of Env antagonists known as conformational blockers, which includes the FDA-approved drug Temsavir, prevents Env transitions to downstream conformations by stabilizing Env State 1 [20,22,54,55].

Besides Env-CD4 interaction, there are also structural features of HIV-1 Env that can modulate the sensitivity of HIV-1 to ADCC responses mediated by nnAbs present in plasma from infected individuals. Natural polymorphisms in the Phe43 cavity (notably in CRF01\_AE strains) and mutations of conserved residues in the trimer association domain have been shown to modulate Env conformation [25,56–59] and as a result, the susceptibility of cells infected with these viruses to ADCC responses [51,60,61]. Similarly, proteolytic cleavage has been reported to stabilize a “closed” Env conformation [62–65], since mutations in the furin cleavage site resulted in the spontaneous sampling of downstream conformations, including Env State 2A [40,55,63]. Here we evaluate the impact of altering the Env furin cleavage site on the susceptibility of infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells to ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma.

#### **4.3.4 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

##### **Ethics Statement**

Written informed consent was obtained from all study participants (the Montreal Primary HIV Infection Cohort [66,67] and the Canadian Cohort of HIV Infected Slow Progressors [68–70]), and research adhered to the ethical guidelines of CRCHUM and was reviewed and approved by the CRCHUM institutional review board (ethics committee, approval number CE 16.164-CA). The research adhered to the standards indicated by the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants

were adults and provided informed written consent prior to enrolment in accordance with Institutional Review Board approval.

### **Cell Lines and Primary Cells**

293T human embryonic kidney cells (obtained from ATCC) and TZM-bl cells (NIH AIDS Reagent Program) were maintained at 37 °C under 5% CO<sub>2</sub> in Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium (DMEM) (Wisent, St. Bruno, QC, Canada), supplemented with 5% fetal bovine serum (FBS) (VWR, Radnor, PA, USA) and 100 U/mL penicillin/streptomycin (Wisent). 293T cells were derived from 293 cells, into which the simian virus 40 T-antigen was inserted. TZM-bl were derived from HeLa cells and were engineered to stably express high levels of human CD4 and CCR5 and to contain the firefly luciferase reporter gene under the control of the HIV-1 promoter [71]. Primary human PBMCs and CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were isolated, activated, and cultured as previously described [26]. Briefly, PBMCs were obtained by leukapheresis from six HIV-negative individuals (all males), and primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T lymphocytes were purified from resting PBMCs by negative selection using immunomagnetic beads per the manufacturer's instructions (StemCell Technologies, Vancouver, BC, Canada) and were activated with phytohemagglutinin-L (10 µg/mL) for 48 h and then maintained in RPMI-1640 (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA) complete medium supplemented with rIL-2 (100 U/mL).

### **Antibodies and Sera**

The following Abs were used to assess Env conformation at the cell surface: conformation-independent anti-gp120 outer-domain 2G12 (NIH AIDS Reagent Program), broadly-neutralizing antibodies anti-CD4 binding site VRC03 (NIH AIDS Reagent Program), anti-V2 apex PG9 (Polymun Scientific, Klosterneuburg, Austria), anti-V3 glycan PGT126, antigp41-gp120 interface PGT151 (IAVI), anti-V3 glycan 10-1074 (kindly provided by Michel Nussenzweig) and anti-fusion peptide VRC34 (kindly provided by John Mascola) as well as non-neutralizing antibodies anti-gp41 C-C loop F240, anti-V3 crown 19b, anti-coreceptor binding site 17b, anti-cluster A A32 and C11 (NIH AIDS Reagent Program). The HIV-IG polyclonal antibody consists of anti-HIV immunoglobulins purified from a pool of plasma from HIV<sup>+</sup> asymptomatic donors (NIH AIDS Reagent Program). Goat anti-human and anti-mouse antibodies pre-coupled to Alexa Fluor 647 (Invitrogen, Rockford, IL, USA) were used as secondary antibodies in flow cytometry

experiments. Plasma from HIV-infected individuals was collected, heat-inactivated and conserved at  $-80\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  until use. In most experiments, the 2G12 monoclonal Ab (mAb) was used to normalize Env expression because of its conformation independence. Both viruses used in the study (CH058 and CH077) are well recognized by 2G12 despite polymorphism found at position 295 in CH077 Env.

### **Small Molecules**

The small-molecule CD4-mimetic compound BNM-III-170 was synthesized as described previously [72]. The HIV-1 attachment inhibitor Temsavir (BMS-626529) was purchased from APExBIO (Houston, TX, USA). The compounds were dissolved in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) at a stock concentration of 10 mM and diluted to 50  $\mu\text{M}$  in phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) for cell-surface staining and virus capture assay or in RPMI-1640 complete medium for ADCC assays.

### **Plasmids and Proviral Constructs**

The vesicular stomatitis virus G (VSV-G)-encoding plasmid was previously described [73]. Transmitted/Founder (T/F) infectious molecular clones (IMCs) of patients CH058 and CH077 were previously reported [74–77]. To generate IMCs encoding for cleavage-deficient Env, two mutations (R508S/R511S) were introduced in the furin cleavage site ( $^{508}\text{REKR}^{511}$ ) using the QuikChange II XL site-directed mutagenesis protocol (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA). The presence of the desired mutations was determined by automated DNA sequencing.

### **Radioactive Labeling and Immunoprecipitation of Envelope Glycoproteins**

293T cells ( $3 \times 10^5$ ) were transfected by the calcium phosphate method with the different IMCs. One day after transfection, cells were metabolically labeled for 16 h with 100  $\mu\text{Ci}/\text{mL}$  of [ $^{35}\text{S}$ ] methionine-cysteine ([ $^{35}\text{S}$ ] Protein Labeling Mix; PerkinElmer, Waltham, MA, USA) in DMEM lacking methionine and cysteine and supplemented with 5% dialyzed fetal bovine serum. Cells were subsequently lysed in RIPA buffer (140 mM NaCl, 8 mM  $\text{Na}_2\text{HPO}_4$ , 2 mM  $\text{NaH}_2\text{PO}_4$ , 1% NP40, 0.05% sodium dodecyl sulfate (SDS), 1.2 mM sodium deoxycholate). Precipitation of radiolabeled envelope glycoproteins from the whole-cell lysates or found in the supernatant was performed with a pool of sera from HIV-1-infected individuals in the presence of 50  $\mu\text{L}$  of 10% Protein A-Sepharose (Cytiva, Marlborough, MA) at  $4\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The precipitated proteins were loaded

onto SDS-PAGE gels and analyzed by autoradiography and densitometry to calculate their processing indexes. The processing index is a measure of the conversion of the mutant gp160 Env precursor to mature gp120, relative to wild-type Env trimers. The processing index is calculated with the following formula: processing index =  $([\text{total gp120}]_{\text{mutant}} \times [\text{gp160}]_{\text{WT}}) / ([\text{gp160}]_{\text{mutant}} \times [\text{total gp120}]_{\text{WT}})$ .

### **Viral Production and Infections**

VSV-G-pseudotyped HIV-1 viruses were produced and concentrated as previously described [60]. Viruses were then used to infect activated primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from healthy HIV-1 negative donors by spin infection at 800 × g for 1 h in 96-well plates at 25 °C. Viral preparations were titrated directly on primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells to achieve similar levels of infection among the different IMCs tested (around 10% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells). To assess viral infectivity, TZM-bl reporter cells were seeded at a density of 2 × 10<sup>4</sup> cells/well in 96-well luminometer-compatible tissue culture plates (PerkinElmer) 24 h before infection. Normalized amounts of viruses (according to reverse transcriptase activity [78]) in a final volume of 100 µL were then added to the target cells and incubated for 48 h at 37 °C. The medium was then removed from each well, and the cells were lysed by the addition of 30 µL of passive lysis buffer (Promega, Madison, WI, USA) and one freeze-thaw cycle. An LB 941 TriStar luminometer (Berthold Technologies, Bad Wildbad, Germany) was used to measure the luciferase activity of each well after the addition of 100 µL of luciferin buffer (15 mM MgSO<sub>4</sub>, 15 mM KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub> [pH 7.8], 1 mM ATP, and 1 mM 170 dithiothreitol) and 50 µL of 1 mM D-luciferin potassium salt (Prolume, Pinetop, AZ, USA).

### **Virus Capture Assay**

The HIV-1 virus capture assay was previously reported [79]. Pseudoviral particles were produced by transfecting 2 × 10<sup>6</sup> 293T cells with pNL4.3 R-E- Luc (NIH AIDS Reagent Program) (3.5 µg), HIV-1<sub>CH058</sub> (3.5 µg), and VSV-G (1 µg) using the standard calcium phosphate method. Forty-eight hours later, virus-containing supernatant was collected, and cell debris were removed by centrifugation (1500 rpm for 10 min). Anti-Env antibodies was immobilized on white MaxiSorp ELISA plates (Thermo Fisher Scientific) at a concentration of 5 µg/mL in 100 µL of PBS overnight at 4 °C. Unbound antibodies were removed by washing twice the plates twice with PBS. Plates were subsequently blocked with 3% bovine serum albumin (BSA) in PBS for 1 h at room

temperature. After washing plates twice with PBS, 200  $\mu$ L of virus-containing supernatants were added to the wells. After 4 to 6 h incubation, virions were removed, and the wells were washed three times with PBS. Virus capture by any given antibody was visualized by adding  $1 \times 10^4$  293T cells per well in complete DMEM. To measure recombinant virus infectivity,  $1 \times 10^4$  293T cells were directly mixed with 100  $\mu$ L of virus-containing supernatants per well. Forty-eight hours post-infection, cells were lysed by the addition of 30  $\mu$ L of passive lysis buffer (Promega) and one freeze-thaw cycle. An LB 941 TriStar luminometer (Berthold Technologies) was used to measure the luciferase activity of each well after the addition of 100  $\mu$ L of luciferin buffer (15 mM MgSO<sub>4</sub>, 15 mM KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub> [pH 7.8], 1 mM ATP, and 1 mM dithiothreitol) and 50  $\mu$ L of 1 mM D-luciferin potassium salt (Prolume).

### **Flow Cytometry Analysis of Cell-Surface and Intracellular Staining**

Cell-surface staining of HIV-1-transfected and HIV-1-infected cells was executed as previously described [35,61]. For transfected cells, we used the standard calcium phosphate method to transfect 7  $\mu$ g of each IMC into  $2 \times 10^6$  293T cells. Binding of cell-surface HIV-1 Env by anti-Env mAbs (5  $\mu$ g/mL) or HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma (1:1000 dilution) was performed at 48 h post-transfection. Similarly, cell-surface staining of infected cells was performed at 48 h post-infection. After cell-surface staining, transfected cells and infected cells were permeabilized using the Cytfix/Cytoperm Fixation/Permeabilization Kit (BD Biosciences, Mississauga, ON, Canada) and stained intracellularly using PE-conjugated mouse anti-p24 mAb (clone KC57; Beckman Coulter, Brea, CA, USA; 1:100 dilution). The percentage of transfected or infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup>) was determined by gating on the living cell population according to a viability dye staining (AquaVivid, Thermo Fisher Scientific). Samples were acquired on an LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences), and data analysis was performed using FlowJo v10.5.3 (Tree Star, Ashland, OR, USA).

### **FACS-Based ADCC Assay**

Measurement of ADCC using the FACS-based assay was performed at 48 h post-infection as previously described [26,36]. Briefly, HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were stained with AquaVivid viability dye and cell proliferation dye eFluor670 (Thermo Fisher Scientific) and used as target cells. Autologous PBMC effectors cells, stained with the cell proliferation dye eFluor450

(Thermo Fisher Scientific), were added at an effector: target ratio of 10:1 in 96-well V-bottom plates (Corning, Glendale, AZ, USA). A 1:1000 final dilution of HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma was added to appropriate wells and cells were incubated for 5 min at room temperature. The plates were subsequently centrifuged for 1 min at 300 × g and incubated at 37 °C, 5% CO<sub>2</sub> for 5 h before being fixed in a 2% PBS-formaldehyde solution. Samples were acquired on an LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences) and data analysis was performed using FlowJo v10.5.3 (Tree Star). The percentage of ADCC was calculated with the following formula: (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in Targets plus Effectors) – (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in Targets plus Effectors plus sera) / (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in Targets) by gating on infected lived target cells.

### Statistical Analysis

Statistics were analyzed using GraphPad Prism version 9.1.0 (GraphPad, San Diego, CA, USA). Every data set was tested for statistical normality and this information was used to apply the appropriate (parametric or nonparametric) statistical test. p values < 0.05 were considered significant; significance values are indicated as \* p < 0.05, \*\* p < 0.01, \*\*\* p < 0.001, \*\*\*\* p < 0.0001.

## 4.3.5 RESULTS

### Conformation of HIV-1 Uncleaved Env at the Surface of Infected Cells and Viral Particles.

To study the role of the furin cleavage site on Env conformation, we performed mutagenesis on the infectious molecular clones (IMCs) of clade B transmitted/founder (T/F) viruses CH058 and CH077. Envs from both viruses were previously shown to preferentially sample the “closed” State 1 conformation [61]. We introduced substitutions in the primary cleavage site at position 508 and 511 (**Figure 4.2.1A**), to replace the highly conserved arginine residues with serine residues (R508S/R511S; referred as Cl<sup>-</sup> mutant), a double mutant known to efficiently abrogate furin-dependant Env processing [64,80–82]. We used protein radioactive labelling of 293T cells transfected with the different IMC constructs followed by Env immunoprecipitation to confirm the effect of the mutations on Env cleavage (**Figure 4.2.1B–E**). As expected, Env glycoproteins expressed from the wild-type (WT) construct were efficiently cleaved while their cleavage-deficient (Cl<sup>-</sup>) counterpart yielded little to no detectable gp120 in



the 293T whole-cell lysates (**Figure 4.2.1B,D**). Although we observed some soluble gp120 in the supernatant of CH058-transfected cells, this was likely due to the presence of a second upstream cleavage site, which matched the furin consensus sequence (RAKR). The supernatant of CH077-transfected cells did not contain gp120 consistent with an altered upstream cleavage site (KAKR) (**Figure 4.2.1A**). Of note, two bands of gp160 with distinct molecular weights were observed in cells transfected with Cl<sup>-</sup> variants, a phenotype previously observed that was linked to a difference in Env trafficking and localization [83–85].

Subsequently, we evaluated the ability of a panel of bNAbs and nnAbs to recognize the cleaved (WT) and uncleaved (Cl<sup>-</sup>) Env at the surface of 293T cells. We selected these cells since they do not express CD4 and it has been well documented that the presence of CD4 affects Env conformation [26,35,86]. Cells were transfected with the different IMC constructs and virus-expressing cells were identified using Gag p24 staining (**Figure 4.2.1F,G**). Cell-surface Env expression was normalized using the conformation-independent 2G12 antibody. Cells expressing WT Env were preferentially recognized by the bNAbs preferring the State 1 conformation (PGT126, VRC03, PG9) and recognizing the fusion peptide (PGT151, VRC34) compared to those expressing the respective cleavage site mutants (**Figure 4.2.1F,G**). Conversely, the binding of nnAbs targeting the downstream conformations States 2/3 (19b, F240, 17b) and State 2A (A32, C11) was significantly enhanced on cells expressing uncleaved Env (**Figure 4.2.1F,G**). To confirm this phenotype in a physiologically more relevant culture system, we infected activated primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells with the different primary IMCs. Of note, all viruses were pseudotyped with the VSV G glycoprotein to normalize the level of infection and to compensate for the inability of uncleaved Env to mediate viral fusion. Consistent with the 293T results, productively-infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup> CD4<sup>low</sup>) were more efficiently recognized by bNAbs when expressing cleaved Env, and by nnAbs when expressing uncleaved Env (**Figure 4.2.1H,I**). Overall, these results support and extend previous observations indicating that furin cleavage favors the adoption of the native “closed” conformation at the cell surface [40,65,84].

We next investigated the effect of furin cleavage on Env conformation at the surface of viral particles, since the viral membrane is known to be enriched in cholesterol, a lipid known to stabilize Env State 1 conformation by interacting with the gp41 membrane-proximal external

region (MPER) [87–89]. Since virions expressing the Env Cl–variants were unable to infect even highly permissive cells, we used a recently developed virus capture assay [79] (**Figure 4.2.2A**). Specifically, we generated luciferase reporter pseudovirions that contained both HIV-1 Env and VSV G glycoproteins, thus allowing captured virions to infect 293T cells in an Env-independent manner (i.e., 293T infection is driven by the incorporated VSV G glycoprotein, **Figure 4.2.2B**). Virions harboring WT Env were captured more efficiently by bNAbs, while virions harboring uncleaved Env were primarily bound by nnAbs (**Figure 4.2.2C**). The recognition of pseudovirions was also assessed using purified anti-HIV-1 immunoglobulins from HIV<sup>+</sup> asymptomatic donors (HIV-IG) [90]. Since the vast majority of naturally-elicited antibodies targets Env in its “open” conformation [26,27,34], HIV-IG polyclonal antibodies captured viral particles displaying immature Env in a larger proportion (**Figure 4.2.2D**). HIV-IG specific capture of uncleaved or cleaved Env could be further increased using the small molecule CD4mc BNM-III-170, which stabilizes the CD4-bound conformation (**Figure 4.2.2D**). Alternatively, treatment with the conformational blocker Temsavir decreased the capacity of HIV-IG to capture viral particles bearing Cl– Envs (**Figure 4.2.2D**), in agreement with its capacity to stabilize the “closed” conformation [20,22,55]. These results indicate that uncleaved Env can be forced into “open” or “closed” conformations using small molecule Env antagonists.

### **Impact of HIV-1 Env Proteolytic Cleavage on ADCC Responses Mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> Plasma.**

Knowing that alterations in the furin cleavage site increase the exposure of downstream conformations at the surface of infected cells and lentiviral particles, we sought to determine whether the presence of uncleaved Env at the surface of infected cells could also affect ADCC responses mediated by plasma from HIV-1-infected donors. Activated primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with WT or cleavage defective CH058 and CH077 and then examined for their susceptibility to ADCC killing following incubation with plasma from 15 different chronically HIV-1-infected individuals. As expected, HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma binding was significantly higher on infected cells expressing cleavage-deficient Env compared to WT Env (**Figure 4.2.3A,B**). Moreover, inhibition of Env cleavage led to strong ADCC responses, while WT-infected cells were protected from these responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma (**Figure 4.2.3C,D**). Treatment with BNM-III-170 was found to enhance the binding of HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma on both WT and Cl– mutant infected cells, consistent with its ability to expose CD4i epitopes. Accordingly, CD4mc addition

induced a potent ADCC response against WT-infected cells, but marginally enhanced the ADCC response against cells expressing cleavage-deficient Env, suggesting that CD4i epitope exposure by uncleaved Env is sufficient to trigger the elimination of infected cells by ADCC. Conversely, the addition of State 1-stabilizing molecule Temsavir protected Cl<sup>-</sup> expressing cells from ADCC by decreasing the binding of HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma to uncleaved Env (**Figure 4.2.3A–D**). Of note, Temsavir did not impact HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma mediated ADCC against WT infected cells since they are known to already express the Env in the “closed” conformation [26,35–37,40,60,61,86,91,92]. Altogether, our results demonstrate the importance for HIV-1 to limit the presence of Env gp160 precursor at the surface of infected cells to evade nAbs-mediated ADCC responses.

#### 4.3.6 DISCUSSION

In this study, we show that uncleaved HIV-1 Env trimers display conformational flexibility which favors the sampling of downstream “more open” conformations at the surface of infected cells and pseudoviral particles. Cell-surface expression of uncleaved gp160 leads to an efficient recognition of infected cells by non-neutralizing CD4i antibodies naturally present in plasma from HIV-1-infected individuals and as a consequence, leads to a significantly higher susceptibility to ADCC responses. Conversely, efficient cleavage by endogenous furin allows Env trimers to sample a metastable “closed” conformation (State 1), thus protecting HIV-1-infected cells from ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma. Beyond the well-established role of furin cleavage on viral infectivity, efficient proteolytic cleavage of Env trimers thus appears to allow HIV-1 to evade humoral immune responses. These results are important in the context of recent findings showing that several interferon-inducible cellular antiviral factors affect Env gp160 precursor processing [93–97]. Among them, IFITM proteins impair Env cleavage through direct interaction with Env, while GBP2 and GBP5 restrict furin protease activity [93,96]. The antiviral activity of both families of proteins can be overcome by HIV-1 through Env substitutions or by increasing Env expression through the deletion of the accessory Vpu protein, respectively [97–100]. According to the Los Alamos National Laboratory HIV sequence database, very few mutations are naturally found in the furin cleavage site, especially for the basic residues found at positions 508, 510, and 511 which are more than 99.7% conserved. Given the importance of an effective Env cleavage to generate infectious viral particles, therapeutic interventions designed to specifically inhibit this proteolytic cleavage could result in a loss in infectivity with a concomitant

increase in ADCC responses against infected cells. A recent study has shown that conformational blockers, such as Temsavir, can interfere with proper Env cleavage by reducing its conformational flexibility [63]. Additional drugs inhibiting directly the furin protease activity, including the synthetic peptide Dec-RVKR-CMK and the serine protease inhibitor  $\alpha_1$ -PDX, are also being investigated, but their in vivo efficacy and toxicity remain to be determined [12,13,101–105]. If these broad-spectrum inhibitors end up being well-tolerated and exhibit good pharmacokinetic properties, they may also be useful as therapeutics against other viral infections, including Influenza A, Ebola, Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and SARS-CoV-2, where the acquisition of a furin cleavage site in the respective fusion glycoproteins appears to confer a higher level of infectivity [106–110].

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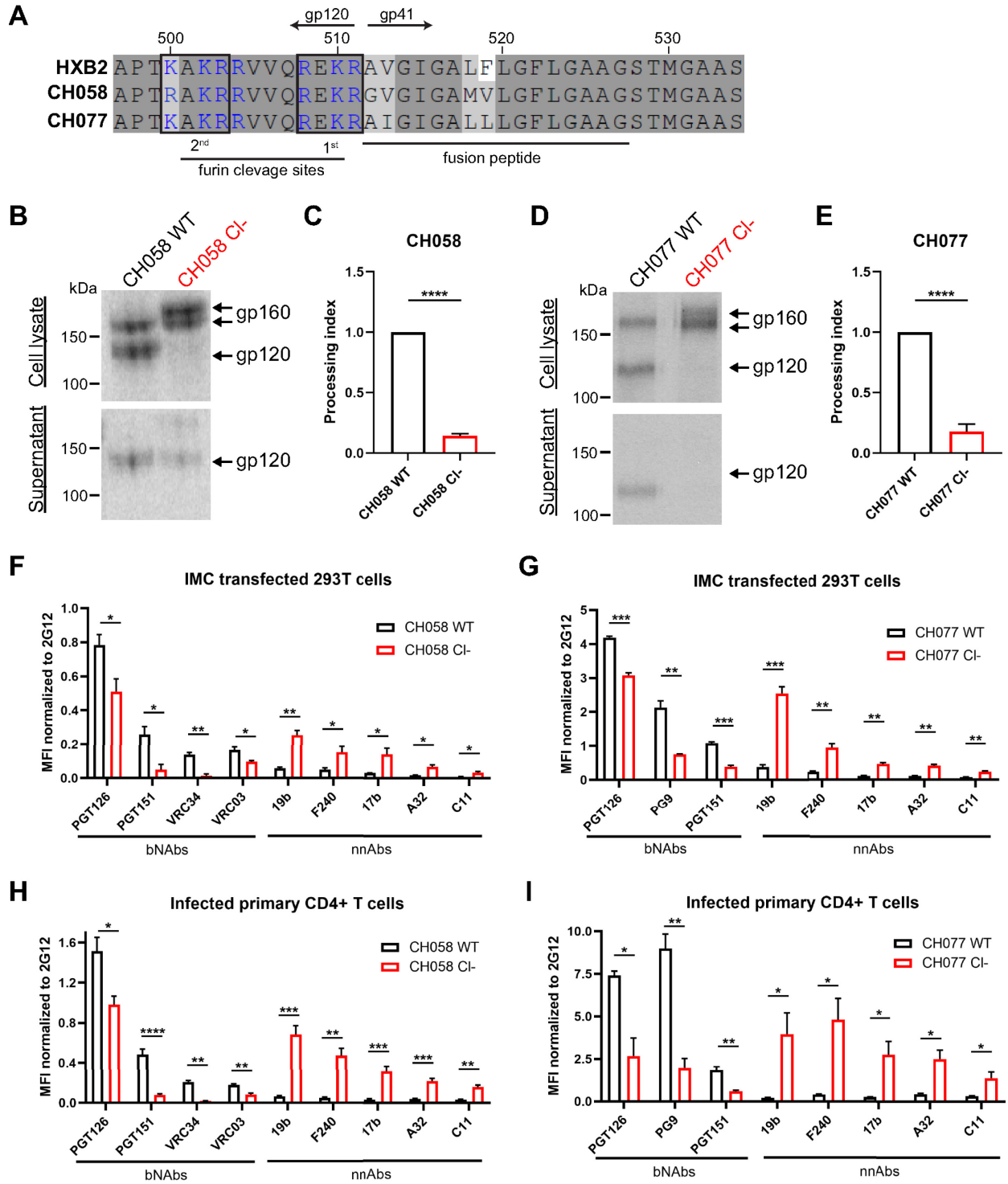
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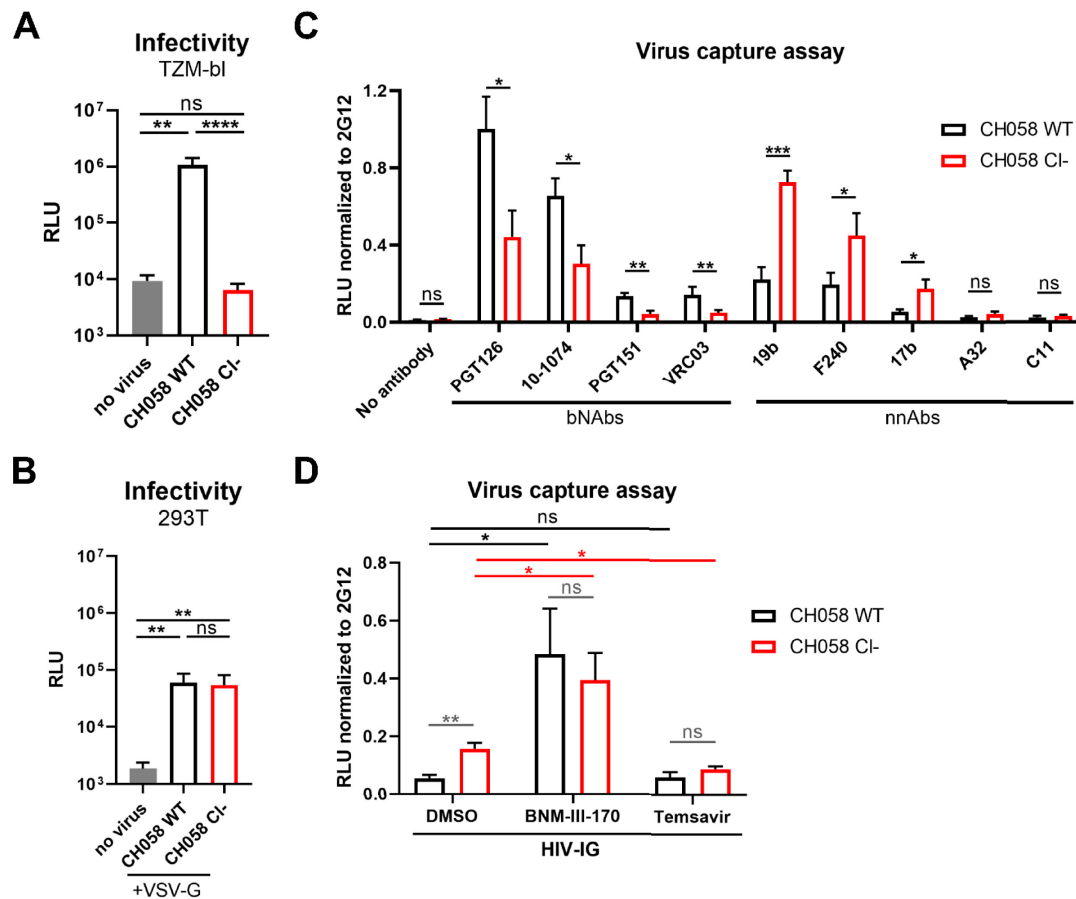
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### 4.3.9 FIGURES



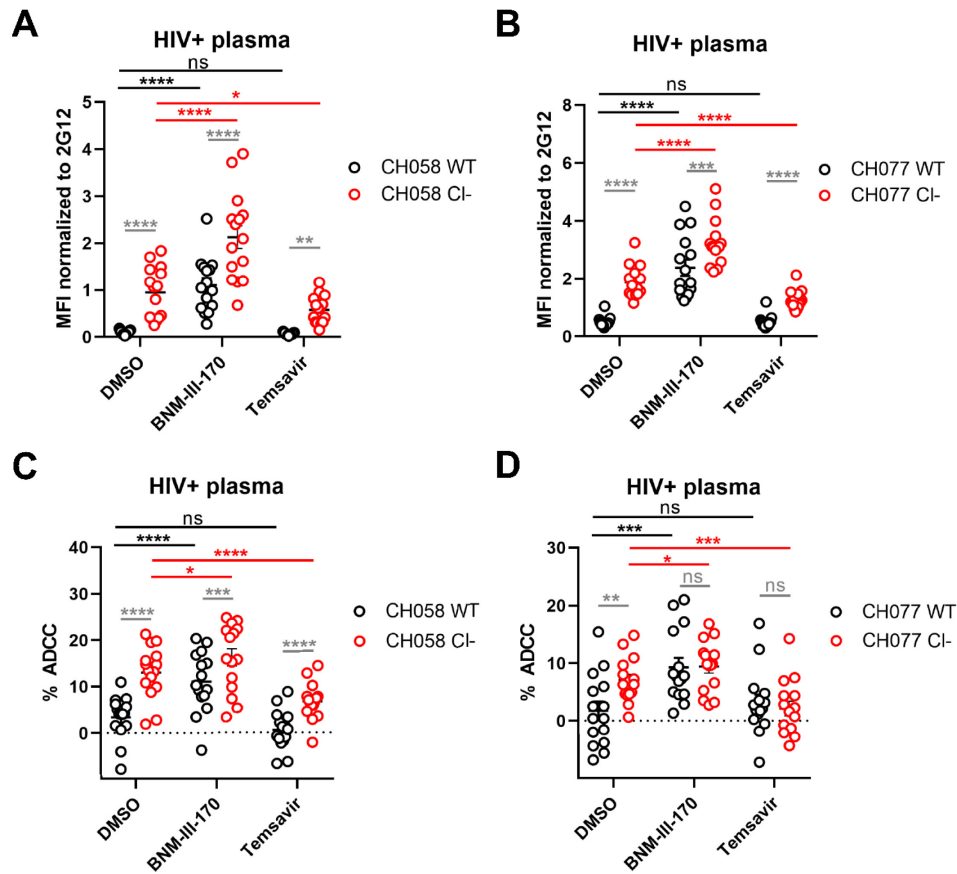
**Figure 4.2.1 - Proteolytic cleavage stabilizes Env in its “closed” conformation.**

(A) Sequence alignment of the HIV-1 Env furin cleavage site region from primary viruses CH058 (GenBank accession number JN944940) and CH077 (GenBank accession number JN944941) with the HXB2 reference strain (GenBank accession number K03455). Putative furin cleavage sequences are highlighted by black boxes. Positively charged residues (arginine and lysine) are shown in blue. Residue numbering is based on the HXB2 strain. Identical residues are shaded in dark gray, and conserved residues are shaded in light gray. (B–E) 293T cells were transfected with primary IMCs (B,C) CH058, (D,E) CH077 WT or their cleavage-deficient (C1–) variants and metabolically labeled with [<sup>35</sup>S]-methionine and [<sup>35</sup>S]-cysteine. (B,D) Cell lysates and supernatants were immunoprecipitated with plasma from HIV-1-infected individuals. The precipitated proteins were loaded onto SDS-PAGE gels and analyzed by autoradiography and densitometry to calculate their processing indexes. The processing index is a measure of the conversion of the mutant gp160 Env precursor to mature gp120, relative to the wild-type Env trimer. (C,E) Shown is the average of processing indexes calculated in 3 independent experiments. (F–I) Cell-surface staining of (F,G) IMC transfected 293T cells (H,I) or primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with IMCs (F,H) CH058 and (G,I) CH077 WT or their cleavage-deficient (C1–) variants using a panel of anti-Env bNAbs (PGT126, PG9, PGT151, VRC34, VRC03) and nnAbs (19b, F240, 17b, A32, C11). Shown are the mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) using the different antibodies normalized to the signal obtained with the conformation-independent 2G12 mAb. MFI values were measured on the transfected or infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) population for staining obtained in at least 3 independent experiments. Error bars indicate the mean ± SEM. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t-test (\*, P < 0.05, \*\*, P < 0.01, \*\*\*, P < 0.001, \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001).



**Figure 4.2.2 - Virions displaying uncleaved Env are better recognized by nnAbs.**

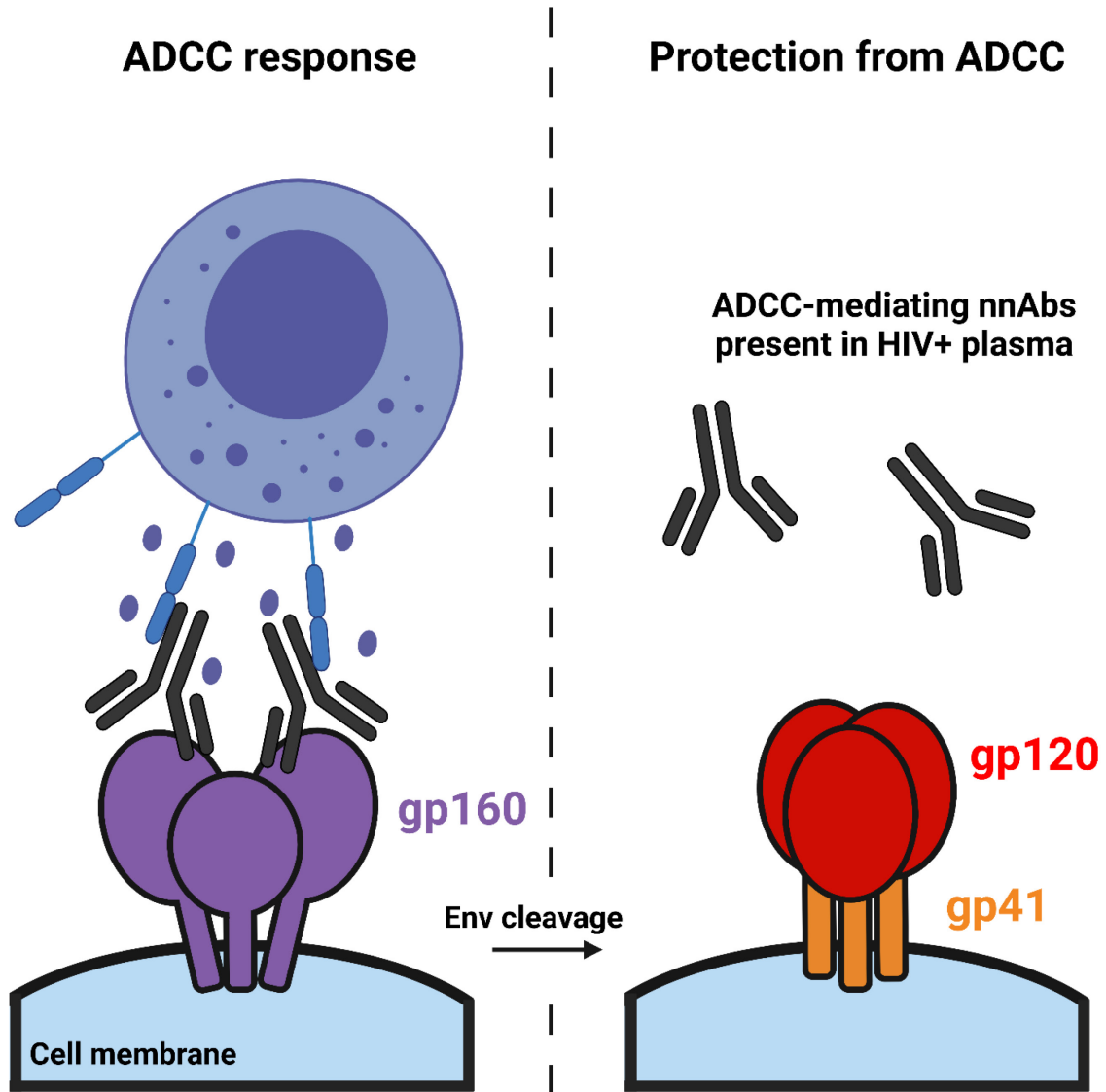
(A) Viral infectivity was assessed by incubating TZM-bl target cells with HIV-1 CH058 virions expressing the wild-type (WT) or cleavage-deficient (Cl-) Env glycoprotein for 48 h. Viral preparations were normalized according to reverse transcriptase activity. (B) VSV-G-pseudotyped viral particles encoding the luciferase gene (Luc+) and bearing HIV-1 CH058 Env wildtype (WT) or its cleavage-deficient mutant (Cl-) were used to infect 293T cells to determine their infectivity in a single-round infection. (C,D) These recombinant pseudovirions were further tested for virus capture by (C) a panel of anti-Env bNAbs (PGT126, PG9, PGT151, VRC34, VRC03) and nnAbs (19b, F240, 17b, A32, C11) or (D) HIV-IG. RLU values obtained using the different antibodies were normalized to the signal obtained with the conformation-independent 2G12 mAb. Data shown are the mean +/- SEM from at least three independent experiments. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t-test or a Mann-Whitney U-test based on statistical normality (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ; ns, nonsignificant).



**Figure 4.2.3 - Env cleavage protects HIV-1-infected cells from ADCC mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma.**

(A,B) Cell surface staining of primary CD4<sup>+</sup>T cells infected with primary HIV-1 viruses (A) CH058 and (B) CH077 WT or their cleavage-deficient (CI<sup>-</sup>) variants using plasma from 15 different HIV-1-infected individuals in the presence of 50  $\mu$ M of CD4mc BNM-III-170, conformational blocker Temsavir or an equivalent volume of the vehicle (DMSO). The graphs show the MFI obtained on the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) cell population. (C,D) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with (C) CH058 and (D) CH077 viruses were also used as target cells, and autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in a FACS-based ADCC assay. The graphs shown represent the percentages of ADCC mediated by 15 different HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma in the presence of 50  $\mu$ M of CD4mc BNM-III-170, attachment inhibitor Temsavir or an equivalent volume of the vehicle (DMSO). All results were obtained using cells from at least three different donors. Error bars indicate the means  $\pm$  SEM. Statistical significance was tested using a repeated measures one-way ANOVA with a Holm-Sidak post-test (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ; ns, nonsignificant).

### 4.3.10 GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



**Figure 4.2.4 - Graphical abstract**

Proteolytic cleavage of HIV-1 Env protects infected cells from ADCC mediated by non-neutralizing antibodies present in plasma from infected individuals.

## **ARTICLE 7**

**L'influence de la cavité Phe43 de l'enveloppe du VIH-1 dans la sensibilité des  
cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC**

***Influence of the Envelope gp120 Phe43 Cavity on HIV-1 Sensitivity to Antibody Dependent  
Cell-Mediated Cytotoxicity Responses***

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Conceptualisation: **J.P.**, M.V. et A.F.; Méthodologie: **J.P.** et A.F.; Recherche: **J.P.**, D.Z. et J.R.; Ressources: M.V., B.P., M.C., N.B., M.S.P., K.R., T.B., S.T., K.K.H., M.A.M., B.F.H., M.B., D.E.K., G.M.S., A.L.C. et A.F.; Analyse formelle: **J.P.**; Visualisation: **J.P.**; Supervision: A.F.; Obtention du financement: B.F.H., J.G.S., D.E.K. et A.F.; Rédaction - version originale: **J.P.**, J.S. et A.F.; Rédaction - révision et édition: **Tous les auteurs.**

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#### 4.4.1 RÉSUMÉ

Les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 qui présentent à leur surface des glycoprotéines d'enveloppe (Env) dans la conformation liée à CD4 sont préférentiellement ciblées par la réponse cytotoxique cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCC). Le VIH-1 a développé des mécanismes sophistiqués pour éviter l'exposition des épitopes d'Env médiant l'ADCC en régulant négativement CD4 et en limitant la quantité totale d'Env à la surface des cellules. Chez le VIH-1, la substitution de la sérine 375 pour un large résidu tels que l'histidine ou le tryptophane (S375H/W) dans la cavité Phe43 de la gp120, où le résidu Phe43 de CD4 entre en contact avec la gp120, entraîne l'adoption spontanée de la conformation liée à CD4 d'Env. Alors que le résidu S375 est bien conservé dans la majorité des isolats de VIH-1 du groupe M, les souches recombinantes CRF01\_AE ont une histidine naturellement présente à cette position (H375). Il est intéressant de noter que le clade CRF01\_AE est la souche prédominante en circulation en Thaïlande, où l'essai vaccinale RV144 a eu lieu. Dans cet essai clinique, qui a donné lieu à un degré de protection modeste, la réponse ADCC a été identifiée comme un corrélat de protection. Nous étudions ici l'influence de la cavité Phe43 sur la réponse ADCC. Le remplissage de cette cavité par un résidu histidine ou tryptophane chez une souche d'Env ayant naturellement un résidu sérine à cette position (S375H/W) augmente la susceptibilité des cellules infectées par le VIH-1 à l'ADCC. À l'inverse, le remplacement de H375 par un résidu sérine (H375S) chez la souche CRF01\_AE diminue l'efficacité de la réponse ADCC. Nos résultats soulèvent la possibilité que la présence de H375 dans la souche en circulation où s'est déroulé l'essai clinique RV144 ait contribué à l'efficacité observée du vaccin.

#### 4.4.2 ABSTRACT

HIV-1-infected cells presenting envelope glycoproteins (Env) in the CD4-bound conformation on their surface are preferentially targeted by antibody-dependent cellular-mediated cytotoxicity (ADCC). HIV-1 has evolved sophisticated mechanisms to avoid the exposure of Env ADCC epitopes by downregulating CD4 and by limiting the overall amount of Env on the cell surface. In HIV-1, substitution of large residues such as histidine or tryptophan for serine 375 (S375H/W) in the gp120 Phe43 cavity, where Phe43 of CD4 contacts gp120, results in the spontaneous sampling of an Env conformation closer to the CD4-bound state. While residue S375 is well conserved in the majority of group M HIV-1 isolates, CRF01\_AE strains have a naturally

occurring histidine at this position (H375). Interestingly, CRF01\_AE is the predominant circulating strain in Thailand, where the RV144 trial took place. In this trial, which resulted in a modest degree of protection, ADCC responses were identified as being part of the correlate of protection. Here we investigate the influence of the Phe43 cavity on ADCC responses. Filling this cavity with a histidine or tryptophan residue in Env with a natural serine residue at this position (S375H/W) increased the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC. Conversely, the replacement of His375 by a serine residue (H375S) within HIV-1 CRF01\_AE decreased the efficiency of the ADCC response. Our results raise the intriguing possibility that the presence of His375 in the circulating strain where the RV144 trial was held contributed to the observed vaccine efficacy.

#### 4.4.3 IMPORTANCE

HIV-1-infected cells presenting Env in the CD4-bound conformation on their surface are preferentially targeted by ADCC mediated by HIV-positive (HIV<sup>+</sup>) sera. Here we show that the gp120 Phe43 cavity modulates the propensity of Env to sample this conformation and therefore affects the susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC. CRF01\_AE HIV-1 strains have an unusual Phe43 cavity-filling His375 residue, which increases the propensity of Env to sample the CD4-bound conformation, thereby increasing susceptibility to ADCC.

#### 4.4.4 INTRODUCTION

Entry is the first step of the human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1) replication cycle and requires the mature viral envelope glycoproteins (Env), which results from the proteolytic cleavage of the gp160 precursor Env into the exterior gp120 and transmembrane gp41 subunits. These subunits are linked by noncovalent bonds, allowing conformational changes of the Env trimer during the entry process ([1–3](#)). The gp120 exterior subunit mediates the initial interaction with the CD4 receptor. gp120 residue 375 is located in what is known as the Phe43 cavity, where Phe43 of CD4 makes numerous contacts with conserved gp120 residues critical for CD4 binding ([4](#)). Some gp120 residues that line this cavity contribute to an aromatic array that helps stabilize the CD4-bound conformation ([1](#), [4](#), [5](#)). Upon CD4 binding, major conformational changes expose the binding site for coreceptor (i.e., CCR5 and CXCR4) interaction ([6](#)). Upon coreceptor engagement, additional conformational changes in gp41 bring together the viral

envelope and the target cell membranes (7, 8). It has been shown that some of these conformational rearrangements could be impacted by large alterations in the Phe43 cavity. The replacement of the well-conserved group M serine at position 375 by a large hydrophobic residue such as tryptophan fills the Phe43 cavity; this substitution alters the Env conformation by predisposing gp120 to spontaneously assume a state closer to the CD4-bound conformation (9). In agreement with the important role played by Env conformation in the CD4 interaction (1, 9–11), a recent study using the simian-human immunodeficiency virus (SHIV) model in rhesus macaques showed that the replacement of residue 375 by larger hydrophobic or basic amino acids enhanced the affinity of Env for macaque CD4 and allowed better infection of macaque T lymphocytes in culture and in vivo (12), highlighting the importance of this residue for viral replication.

Besides its potential involvement in viral replication, the CD4-bound conformation of HIV-1 Env represents a major target of antibodies (Abs) present in sera of HIV-1- infected individuals that mediate antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) (13). It has been shown that HIV-1 minimizes the exposure of this ADCC-susceptible Env conformation using a highly sophisticated strategy to keep Env on the surface of infected cells in the unbound “closed” conformation. HIV-1 accomplishes this through its accessory proteins Nef and Vpu, which decrease the overall amounts of Env (via Vpu-mediated BST-2 downregulation) and CD4 at the cell surface (13–16). In addition, decreased amounts of Env at the cell surface due to efficient internalization also help the virus to avoid ADCC responses (17). In agreement with the need for HIV-1 to avoid exposing Env in the CD4-bound conformation, it was recently shown that forcing Env to adopt this conformation with small CD4-mimetic compounds (CD4mcs) sensitizes HIV-1- infected cells to ADCC responses (18–20). Accordingly, we recently reported that the transition of Env to the CD4-bound conformation is required for efficient interactions with ADCC-mediating antibodies (14). We reported that the replacement of serine 375 by a tryptophan residue (S375W) enhanced the exposure of epitopes recognized by anti-cluster A antibodies, known to mediate potent ADCC responses (13, 14, 18, 20–26). Thus, the transition of Env from the unbound to the CD4-bound conformation appears to be a prerequisite for the exposure of inner-domain ADCC epitopes. However, how the presence of naturally occurring Phe43 cavity-filling residues affects ADCC responses remains unknown.

While Ser375 is well conserved in the majority of group M HIV-1 isolates, we noticed that CRF01\_AE Env possess a Phe43 cavity-filling residue at position 375 (His375) (27). CRF01\_AE is the predominant circulating strain in Thailand, where the RV144 clinical vaccine trial took place. In this trial, which resulted in a modest degree of clinical protection, ADCC responses were identified as a correlate of protection (28), raising the intriguing possibility that naturally occurring His375 in CRF01\_AE Env might have contributed to this outcome. Here we explored the influence of the integrity of the Phe43 cavity on ADCC responses.

#### 4.4.5 RESULTS

##### **Comparison of residue 375 flanking the Phe43 cavity among HIV-1 strains.**

The vast genetic variability of HIV-1 resulted in its classification into 4 major groups, groups M, N, O, and P. Group M, or “main” group, viruses are responsible for the majority of the global HIV-1 pandemic. Group M is comprised of nine major subtypes and circulating recombinant forms (CRFs) (29–33). To determine the variance in residue 375 among HIV-1 Env, we analyzed all available group M sequences in the NIH Los Alamos HIV database. Interestingly, while the vast majority (84%) of group M strains have a serine at position 375 (S375) and another 9% have a closely related T375 substitution (Fig. 4.3.1A to D and F to H), nearly all CRF01\_AE Env have a large basic aromatic histidine residue at this position. Indeed, alignments revealed 99% conservation for H375 in CRF01\_AE strains (Fig. 4.3.1E), clearly differentiating them from the other circulating strains of group M.

##### **Effect of Phe43 cavity-filling changes on recognition and ADCC-mediated killing of HIV-1-infected cells.**

It has been shown that the replacement of serine 375 by a histidine or tryptophan residue fills the Phe43 cavity and predisposes Env to assuming a slightly more CD4-bound-like conformation (9). Moreover, it has been shown that sampling of the CD4-bound conformation results in an enhanced exposure of epitopes recognized by anti-cluster A antibodies (14, 34). To evaluate whether this enhanced recognition translates into enhanced susceptibility to ADCC, primary CD4 T cells from healthy HIV-1-negative donors were infected with HIV-1 NL4-3-GFP infectious molecular clones (IMCs) expressing wild-type (WT) strain ADA Env or mutant Env

with a histidine (S375H) or a tryptophan (S375W) substitution at position 375. In parallel, primary CD4 T cells were infected with SHIVs expressing clade C and D HIV-1 Env with the same substitutions in residue 375 (WT and S375H and S375W mutants). Since it is now well established that CD4 present on the cell surface affects Env conformation by forcing it to assume the CD4-bound conformation ([13](#), [14](#), [21](#), [22](#), [35](#)), we first evaluated the ability of all the IMCs to downregulate CD4. **Figure 4.3.2** shows that all IMCs tested, independently of the residue present at position 375, efficiently downregulated CD4 from the cell surface (**Fig. 4.3.2A to C**). Therefore, any detected effects on Env conformation cannot be attributed to differential CD4 downregulation but rather to the nature of the residue present within the Phe43 cavity. Since Env levels present on the cell surface have been shown to affect ADCC responses ([17](#)), we verified the overall amount of Env present on the surface of infected cells. Env levels present on the cell surface were unaffected by the nature of the residue present at position 375. Indeed, we detected similar levels of Env expression using the gp120 outer-domain-specific 2G12 antibody for clade B and D Env (**Fig. 4.3.2D and F**). Due to the poor recognition of clade C Env by the 2G12 antibody, we utilized the broadly neutralizing anti-gp41 10e8 antibody to measure clade C Env expression (**Fig. 4.3.2E**). No effect of the changes at residue 375 on Env expression on the surface of cells infected with a SHIV expressing a clade C Env was observed (**Fig. 4.3.2E**). In agreement with an effect on Env conformation, we observed that in all the cases, filling of the Phe43 cavity by the replacement of residue 375 with a histidine or a tryptophan residue significantly increased the binding of Env by CD4-induced (CD4i) antibodies that recognize the coreceptor binding site (CoRBS) (17b) or the cluster A epitope (A32) (**Fig. 4.3.2G to L**). Interestingly, we observed that Env with a “filled” Phe43 cavity (S375H and S375W mutants) were also recognized significantly better by HIV-positive (HIV<sup>+</sup>) sera than those with an “empty” Phe43 cavity (S375) (**Fig. 4.3.2M to O**), thus supporting the notion that the CD4-bound conformation affects the recognition of Env by ADCC-mediated CD4i antibodies and antibodies within HIV<sup>+</sup> sera ([13](#)).

To evaluate whether the enhanced recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by A32 and antibodies within HIV<sup>+</sup> sera translated into increased susceptibility to ADCC responses, we used a previously described fluorescence-activated cell sorter (FACS)-based ADCC assay ([18](#), [21](#)). Briefly, primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected for 48 h were incubated with autologous peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) (effector-to-target cell ratio of 10:1) in the presence of A32 or HIV<sup>+</sup>

sera (1:1,000). The percentage of cytotoxicity was calculated as described previously (18). In agreement with the poor recognition of infected cells expressing wild-type Env (S375), we observed low ADCC activity mediated by A32 (Fig. 4.3.3A to C) or sera from 15 HIV-1-infected individuals (Fig. 4.3.3D to F). However, replacing S375 with a histidine or tryptophan residue resulted in a significant increase in susceptibility to ADCC for the three IMCs tested. Of note, no staining of infected cells or ADCC responses were observed when sera from healthy HIV-1-negative donors were used (not shown).

### **The Phe43 cavity modulates recognition of CRF01\_AE HIV-1-infected cells by CD4i antibodies and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera.**

CRF01\_AE HIV-1 isolates have a highly conserved histidine residue at Env position 375 (Fig. 4.3.1E), which was recently shown to be important for CD4 interaction (27) but also to confer strong resistance to the BMS-599793 entry inhibitor (36). To evaluate whether His375 influences the recognition of infected cells by ADCC-mediating antibodies and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera, His375 in the CRF01\_AE 703357 strain was replaced by a serine (H375S). This strain was identified in the RV144 cohort and submitted to GenBank.

CRF01\_AE IMCs were used to infect primary CD4 T cells from healthy uninfected donors. The impact of residue 375 on Env conformation was evaluated with CD4i 17b and A32 antibodies as well as sera from clade B- and CRF01\_AE-infected individuals. The nature of the residue at position 375 did not affect CD4 downregulation (Fig. 4.3.4A) or Env expression, as evaluated by the binding of the 10e8 antibody (Fig. 4.3.4B). In contrast to the limited recognition of clade B, C, and D HIV-1-infected cells by A32, 17b, and antibodies within HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (Fig. 4.3.2) (13, 18, 20, 22, 37), cells infected with wild-type CRF01\_AE Env (H375) were better recognized by both CD4i monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) as well as polyclonal sera (Fig. 4.3.4C to F). Strikingly, the replacement of His 375 by a serine residue (H375S) significantly decreased the recognition of infected cells by these ligands (Fig. 4.3.4). Overall, these results suggest that the recognition of wild-type CRF01\_AE HIV-1 by CD4i antibodies and antibodies within HIV<sup>+</sup> sera is enhanced by the Phe43 cavity-filling histidine residue at 375. H375 functions as a proxy of small CD4mcs, which were recently shown to push Env into the CD4-bound conformation and sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC (18).

### **The Phe43 cavity modulates recognition of CRF01\_AE HIV-1-infected cells by serum antibodies isolated from RV144 vaccinees.**

A correlation between high levels of ADCC-mediating antibodies and HIV-1 acquisition in the RV144 vaccine trial was suggested for a subset of individuals with low plasma IgA anti-Env antibody levels (26, 28). ADCC-mediating mAbs targeting multiple epitopes were isolated from memory B cells of RV144 vaccine recipients (26, 38). Importantly, we demonstrated that the vaccine-induced ADCC-mediating antibodies directed against A32-blockable conformational epitopes poorly recognize Env on the surface of HIV-1-infected cells (clade B) unless the CD4 receptor was present on the surface of infected cells. This was achieved by deleting the *nef* and *vpu* genes (14). Since the predominantly circulating strain in Thailand is a CRF01\_AE HIV-1 strain, which has a histidine at residue 375, we asked whether these antibodies, thought to have protected against HIV-1 transmission in RV144 recipients, recognized CRF01\_AE HIV-1-infected cells in a manner dependent on Env residue 375. Wild-type (H375) or H375S mutant CRF01\_AE IMCs were used to infect primary CD4 T cells from healthy uninfected donors. **Figure 4.3.5** shows that 11/12 (91.7%) A32-blockable antibodies induced by the RV144 vaccine recognized CRF01\_AE HIV-1-infected cells expressing wild-type Env H375 significantly better than they recognized cells infected with the H375S counterpart.

### **Residue 375 modulates ADCC responses against CRF01\_AE HIV-1-infected cells by CD4i antibodies, antibodies within HIV<sup>+</sup> sera, and antibodies from RV144 vaccinees.**

To assess whether the recognition of CRF01\_AE HIV-1-infected cells by A32, antibodies within HIV<sup>+</sup> sera, and antibodies from RV144 vaccinees correlated with ADCC responses, primary CD4 T cells were infected as described above, and ADCC was measured as described in Materials and Methods. **Figure 4.3.6** shows that wild-type (H375) CRF01\_AE HIV-1-infected cells were readily susceptible to ADCC mediated by A32 and antibodies within HIV<sup>+</sup> sera from individuals infected with clade B and CRF01\_AE HIV-1 strains. This result contrasts with the relatively poor ADCC activity observed for these antibodies against primary CD4 T cells infected with wild-type (S375) HIV-1 strains from clades B, C, and D (**Fig. 4.3.3**). ADCC responses directed against CRF01\_AE HIV-1-infected cells depended on the presence of His375, as cells infected with the H375S virus variant were significantly less sensitive to ADCC. Similar results were observed



when ADCC experiments were done using the majority of RV144 anti-cluster A antibodies (CH29, CH38, CH40, CH51, CH52, CH54, CH77, CH80, and CH94) (**Fig. 4.3.7**).

#### 4.4.6 DISCUSSION

Renewed interest in the Fc-mediated functions of antibodies such as ADCC stems in part from observed correlations with the control or prevention of HIV-1 infection. Fc-mediated effector functions were found to inversely correlate with viral loads or disease progression in simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV)-infected macaques ([39–41](#)) as well as in HIV-1-infected individuals ([42–46](#)). Furthermore, analysis of correlates of immune protection in the recent RV144 vaccine trial suggested that high levels of ADCC-mediating Abs correlated with decreased HIV-1 acquisition when combined with low plasma IgA anti-Env antibody levels ([28](#), [47](#)). Moreover, the CD4-bound conformation of Env was recently shown to be a major target of ADCC-mediating antibodies present in the sera of HIV-1-infected individuals ([13](#)). Accordingly, here we report that the size of the residue located within the Phe43 cavity of Env modulates the recognition and killing of HIV-1-infected cells by antibodies within HIV<sup>+</sup> sera and ADCC-mediating monoclonal antibodies, including those isolated from RV144 vaccinees. Altogether, our results suggest a model (**Fig. 4.3.8**) where the conformation spontaneously sampled by Env at the surface of infected cells has a significant impact on ADCC susceptibility. Env with an empty Phe43 cavity are protected from such responses due to the adoption of a conformation similar to that of the unliganded closed state (state 1) and the ability of Nef and Vpu to downregulate CD4 from the cell surface ([14](#)). This state 1 conformation of Env could be modulated by CD4mcs ([18](#)) or by naturally occurring Phe43 cavity-filling residues, which shift Env conformation toward the CD4-bound state. The CD4-bound Env conformation efficiently exposes anti-cluster A epitopes, known to be recognized by antibodies present in the majority of HIV-1-infected individuals and to mediate potent ADCC responses ([13](#), [14](#), [18](#), [20–26](#)). Therefore, our results raise the intriguing possibility that histidine 375 present in the predominant strain replicating in Thailand might have contributed to the efficacy of the trial by spontaneously exposing epitopes recognized by ADCC-mediating antibodies elicited by the RV144 vaccine regimen.

Since the first emergence of CRF01\_AE HIV-1 strains in Africa and subsequent spread to Asia, where it established a major epidemic, this virus has become the dominant strain in many

Asian countries, including southern China and Thailand (48–50). Why CRF01\_AE HIV-1 was able to spread so rapidly is unclear at the moment, but high viral loads and short survival times have been associated with CRF01\_AE infection compared with the values seen for HIV-1 infections in the Western world (51–53). Additional work is needed to assess the evolutionary selective pressures that resulted in the fixation of a histidine residue at position 375 in this rapidly spreading viral strain. Substitutions of large residues like histidine at this position have been shown to result in SHIVs that bind rhesus macaque CD4 and replicate in monkeys more efficiently (12). Apparently, the advantages of the S375W change in specific hosts (rhesus monkeys and some southern Chinese and Thai individuals) outweigh negative consequences such as enhanced susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC responses. Our results warrant further studies that assess potential host factors that drive HIV-1 variation in the Phe43 cavity. The importance of the variation in residue 375 to susceptibility to the protective efficacy of HIV-1 vaccine-induced antibody responses also merits additional investigation.

#### **4.4.7 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

##### **Plasmids and site-directed mutagenesis**

Individual Env mutations were introduced in the previously described pNL43-ADA(Env)-GFP.IRES.Nef proviral vector (14) by using the QuikChange II XL site-directed mutagenesis protocol (Stratagene). The plasmids encoding SHIV clade C strain CH505, SHIV clade D strain 191859, and their variants were previously described (12). The sequence of HIV-1 CRF01\_AE transmitted-founder (T/F) clone 703357 was derived by using a single-genome amplification (SGA) strategy. The entire DNA sequence including both long terminal repeats (LTRs) was cloned into pUC57 to generate a full-length infectious molecular clone (FLIMC) (GenBank accession numbers JX448154 and JX448164). Single mutations were then introduced into FLIMC 703357.

##### **Cell lines and isolation of primary cells**

293T human embryonic kidney cells were obtained from the ATCC and were grown as previously described (14). PBMCs from healthy donors were obtained under research regulations approved by the Centre de Recherche du CHUM (CRCHUM); written informed consent was

obtained from each individual. CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were purified from rested PBMCs by negative selection and activated as previously described (18).

### **Virus production and infections**

In order to achieve the same level of infection among the different mutants tested, vesicular stomatitis virus G (VSVG)-pseudotyped HIV-1 clones were produced, as previously described (14). This was necessary since mutations at residue 375 were shown to affect CD4 binding and infectivity in CRF01\_AE strains (27). Briefly, proviral vectors and a VSVG-encoding plasmid were co-transfected into 293T cells by standard calcium phosphate transfection. Two days after transfection, cell supernatants were harvested, clarified by low-speed centrifugation (5 min at 1,500 rpm), and concentrated by ultracentrifugation for 1 h at 4°C at 100,605 × g over a 20% sucrose cushion. Pellets were resuspended in fresh RPMI, and aliquots were stored at -80°C until use. Viruses were then used to infect ~10 to 15% of primary CD4 T cells by spinoculation at 800 × g for 1 h in 96-well plates at 25°C.

### **Antibodies and sera**

The gp120 outer-domain-specific 2G12 and the anti-gp41 10E8 antibodies were obtained from the NIH AIDS and Research and Reference Reagent Program. Anti-gp120 cluster A antibody A32 and coreceptor binding site antibody 17b were previously reported (14, 24, 54, 55). A32-blockable conformational epitope ADCC-mediating antibodies isolated from recipients of the RV144 ALVAC-HIV AIDSVAX B/E vaccine (CH29, CH38, CH40, CH51, CH52, CH54, CH77, CH80, CH81, CH89, CH91, and CH94) were previously described (14, 26). Sera from HIV-infected individuals (Table 4.3.1) were collected, heat inactivated, and stored as previously described (18). Written informed consent was obtained from all study participants (the Montreal Primary HIV Infection Cohort [56, 57] and the Canadian Cohort of HIV Infected Slow Progressors [58–60]), and research adhered to the ethical guidelines of the CRCHUM and was reviewed and approved by the CRCHUM institutional review board (ethics committee). Additional serum samples were acquired from HIV-1-infected individuals from Thailand who were enrolled in the HIV STAR study, as previously described (61) (Table 4.3.2). The Thai Ministry of Public Health and local ethics committees approved the collection of these samples. All donors provided informed consent. Research adhered to the standards indicated by the Declaration of Helsinki. All

sera were heat inactivated for 30 min at 56°C and stored at 4°C until they were ready for use in subsequent experiments. A randomnumber generator (QuickCalcs; GraphPad) was used to randomly select a number of serum samples for each experiment. Anti-CD4 monoclonal antibody OKT4 (BioLegend) binds to the D3 domain of CD4 and was used to measure cell surface levels of CD4, as described previously (14). Goat anti-mouse and anti-human antibodies coupled to Alexa Fluor 647 (Invitrogen) were used as secondary antibodies in flow cytometry experiments.

### **Flow cytometry analysis of cell surface staining and ADCC responses**

Cell surface staining was performed as previously described, and mean fluorescence intensity (MFI) histograms show signals on live infected populations (13, 18). Binding of HIV-1-infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (1:1,000 dilution) or anti-CD4 (OKT4) or anti-Env mAbs (5 µg/ml) was performed 48 h after in vitro infection. Detection of green fluorescent protein-positive (GFP<sup>+</sup>), p24<sup>+</sup>, or p27<sup>+</sup> infected cells was performed as described previously (37). The percentage of infected cells (i.e., GFP<sup>+</sup>, p24<sup>+</sup>, or p27<sup>+</sup> cells) was determined by gating the living cell population based on viability dye staining (Aqua Vivid, catalog number L43957; Thermo Fisher Scientific). Samples were analyzed on an LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences, Mississauga, ON, Canada), and data analysis was performed by using FlowJo v10.0.7 (Tree Star, Ashland, OR, USA).

Measurement of ADCC-mediated killing was performed by using a previously described assay (18). Briefly, primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected for 48 h with the different molecularly cloned viruses described above were incubated with autologous PBMCs (effector-to-target cell ratio of 10:1) in the presence of A32, RV144 antibodies (5 µg/ml), or HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (1:1,000). The percentage of cytotoxicity was calculated as described previously (18).

### **Statistical analyses**

Statistics were analyzed by using GraphPad Prism version 6.0.1 (GraphPad, San Diego, CA, USA). P values of < 0.05 were considered significant; significance values are indicated in the figure legends.

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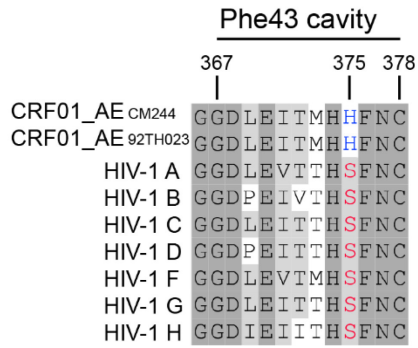
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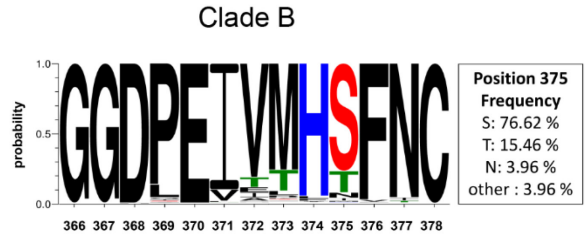
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#### 4.4.10 FIGURES

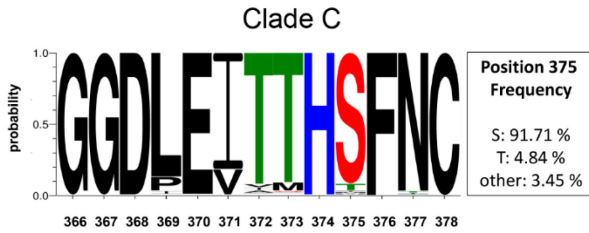
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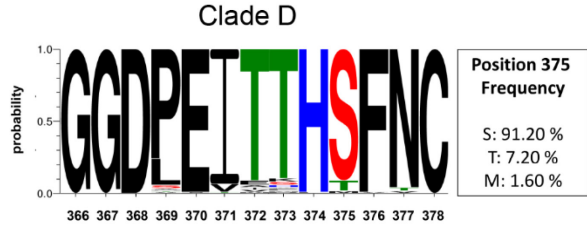
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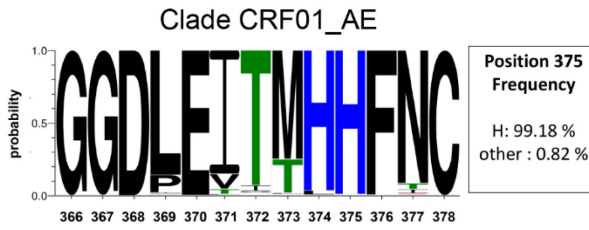
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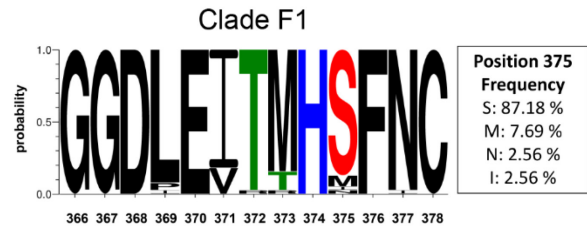
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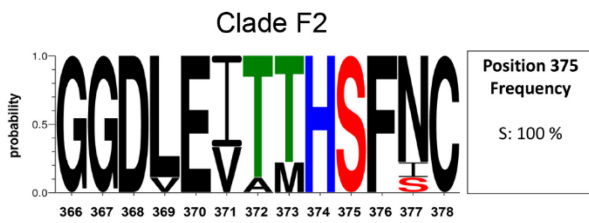
**E**



**F**



**G**



**H**



**Figure 4.3.1 - Sequence alignment of gp120 residues flanking the Phe43 cavity of different HIV-1 isolates.**

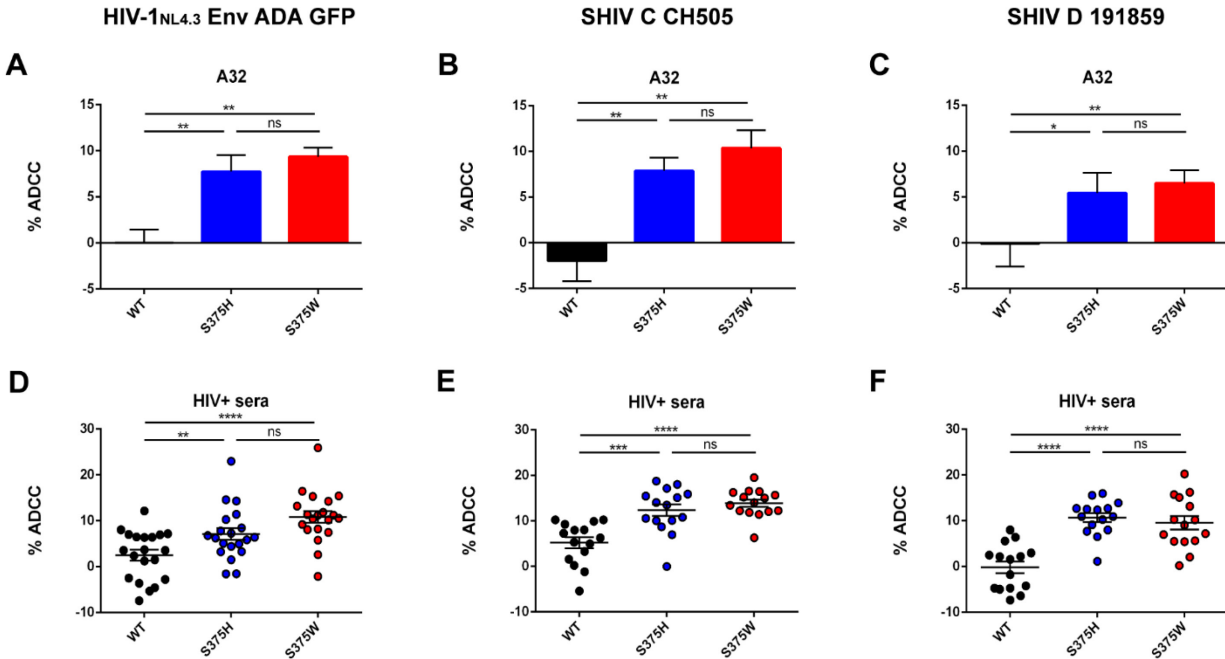
(A) Primary sequence alignment of gp120 residues flanking the Phe43 cavity based on a single representative sequence from each clade, including HIV-1 clade A (GenBank accession number ABB29387.1), HIV-1 clade B (accession number K03455), HIV-1 clade C (accession number AAB36507.1), HIV-1 clade D (accession number P04581.1), HIV-1 clade F (accession number ACR27173.1), HIV-1 clade G (accession number ACO91925.1), and HIV-1 clade H (accession number AAF18394.1), and two CRF01\_AE strains, CM244 (accession number AY713425) and 92TH023. Residue numbering is based on that of the HXBc2 strain of HIV-1. Identical residues are shaded in dark gray, and conserved residues are shaded in light gray. S375 is shown in red, and H375 is shown in blue. (B to H) Logo depictions of the frequency of each amino acid from the Phe43 cavity at positions 366 to 378 in isolates from clade B, clade C, clade D, CRF01\_AE, clade F1, clade F2, and clade G. The height of the letter indicates its frequency within the clade. The box beside each logo indicates the frequency of all the amino acids at position 375. The 2016 Los Alamos database-curated Env alignment was used as the basis for this figure, which contains 4,397 amino acid HIV-1 group M sequences (1,897 of subtype B, 1,363 of subtype C, 125 of subtype D, 39 of subtype F1, 9 of subtype F2, 88 of subtype G, and 486 of CRF01\_AE).





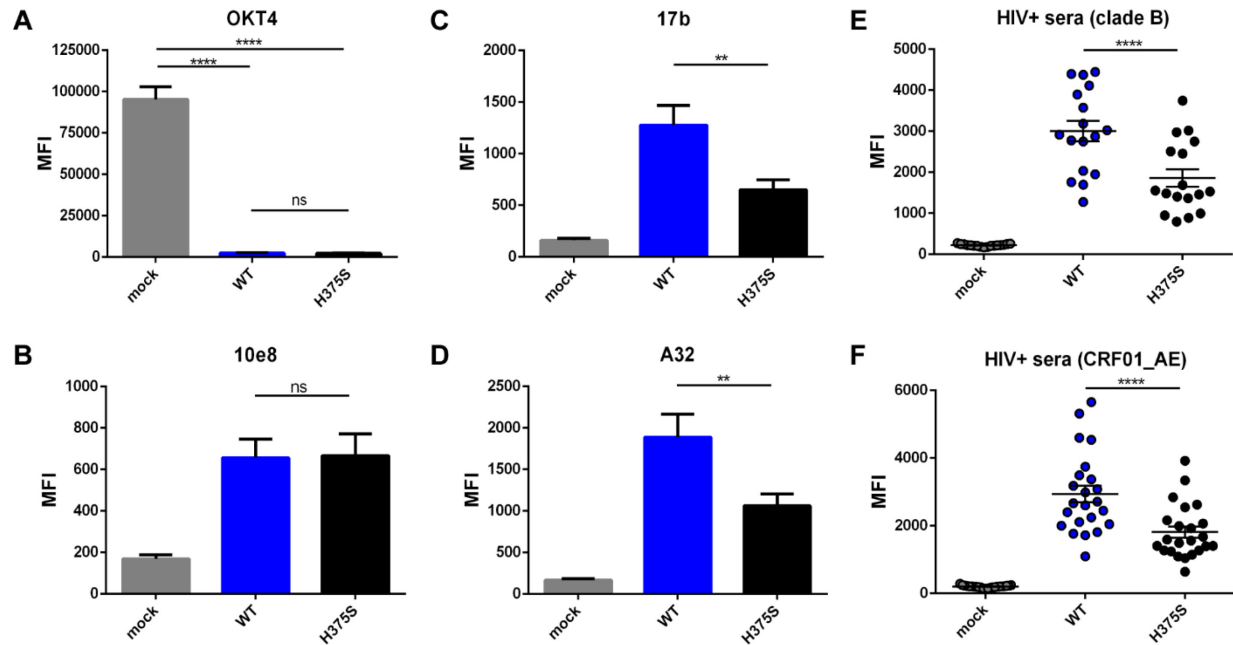
**Figure 4.3.2 - The Phe43 cavity modulates recognition of clade B, C, and D HIV-1-infected cells by CD4i antibodies and antibodies within HIV<sup>+</sup> sera.**

Shown are data for cell surface staining of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells that were either mock infected or infected with HIV-1 NL4.3-GFP expressing the primary R5 ADA Env (clade B) or SHIV expressing either CH505 (clade C) or 191859 (clade D) Env with anti-CD4 antibody OKT4 (**A to C**); the Env-specific antibody 2G12 (**D and F**) or 10E8 (**E**), which are not influenced by changes in residue 375; CD4i antibodies 17b (**G to I**) and A32 (**J to L**); and antibodies within HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**M to O**). Shown are the MFIs obtained from at least 3 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested by using paired one-way analysis of variance with a Holm-Sidak post-test (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).



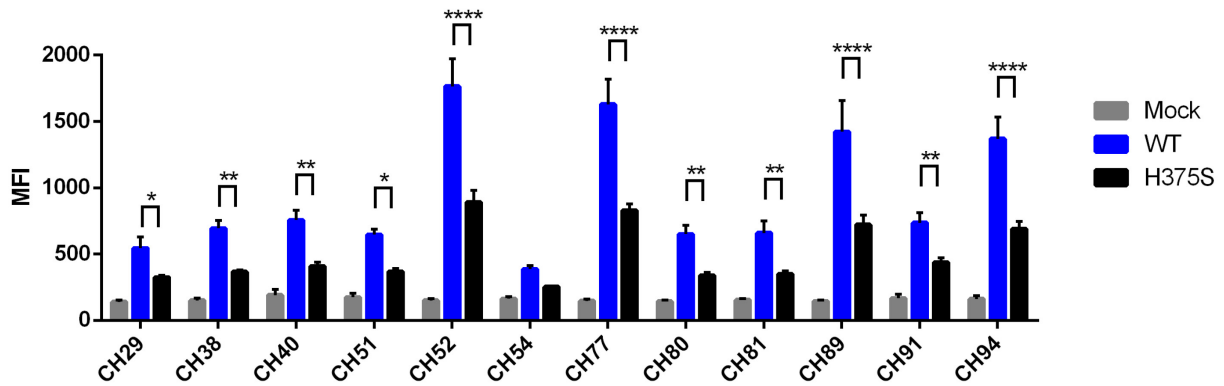
**Figure 4.3.3 - The Phe43 cavity modulates ADCC responses mediated by the A32 antibody and antibodies within HIV<sup>+</sup> sera.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with NL4.3-GFP expressing the primary R5 ADA Env (clade B) or SHIV expressing either CH505 (clade C) or 191859 (clade D) Env were used as target cells and autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in our FACS-based ADCC assay, as described in Materials and Methods. Shown are the percentages of ADCC activity in the presence of anti-cluster A monoclonal antibody A32 (**A to C**) or in the presence of HIV sera from HIV-1 clade B-infected individuals (**D to F**). These results are representative of those obtained in at least 3 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested by using paired one-way analysis of variance with a Holm-Sidak post-test (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ; ns, nonsignificant).



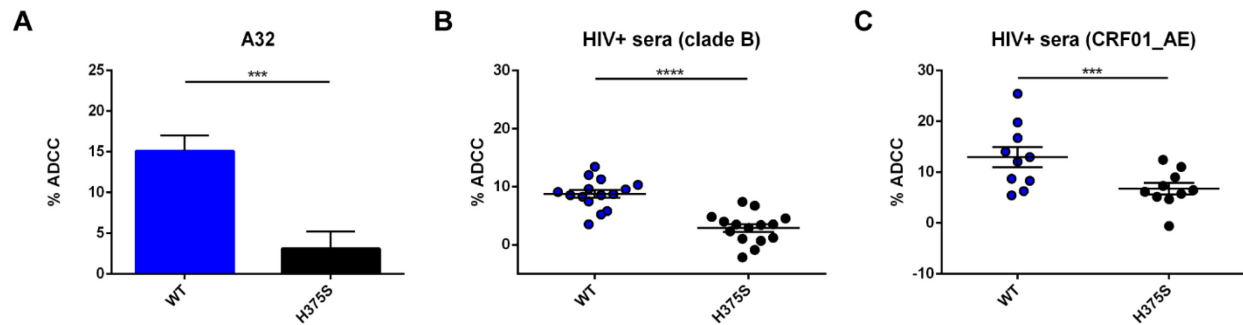
**Figure 4.3.4 - The Phe43 cavity modulates the recognition of CRF01\_AE HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells by CD4i antibodies and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera.**

Shown are data for cell surface staining of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells that were either mock infected or infected with the WT or the H375S variant of CRF01\_AE transmitted-founder HIV-1 (IMC 703357) with anti-CD4 antibody OKT4 (A), conformation-insensitive Env-specific antibody 10E8 (B), CD4i antibodies 17b (C) and A32 (D), and sera from individuals infected with HIV-1 clade B (E) or HIV-1 CRF01\_AE (F). Shown are the MFIs obtained in at least 4 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested by using an unpaired two-tailed t test for mAbs or a paired two-tailed t test for HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ; ns, nonsignificant).



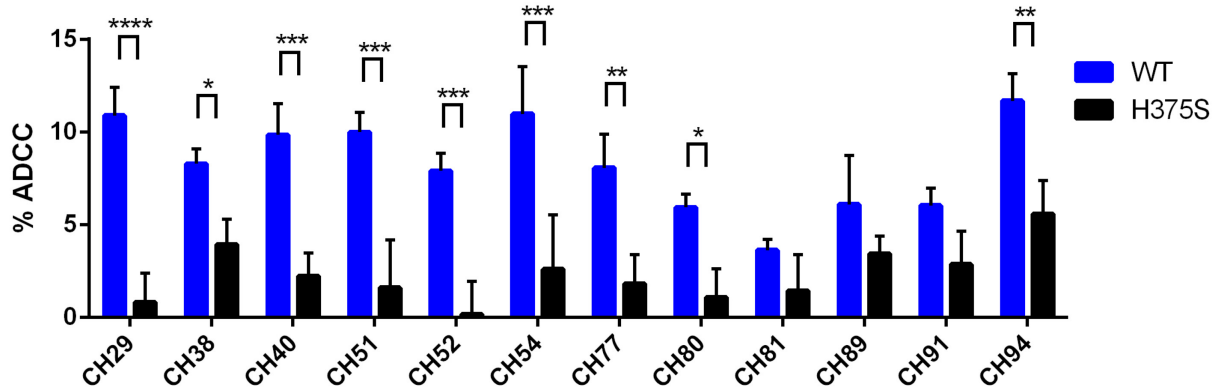
**Figure 4.3.5 - The Phe43 cavity modulates the recognition of CRF01\_AE HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells by antibodies isolated from RV144 vaccinees.**

Shown are data for cell surface staining of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells that were either mock infected or infected with the WT or an H375S mutant of CRF01\_AE transmitted-founder HIV-1 (IMC 703357) with A32-blockable mAbs isolated from RV144 vaccinees (CH29, CH38, CH40, CH51, CH52, CH54, CH77, CH80, CH81, CH89, CH91, and CH94). Shown are the MFIs obtained in at least 5 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested by using an unpaired two-tailed t test (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ).



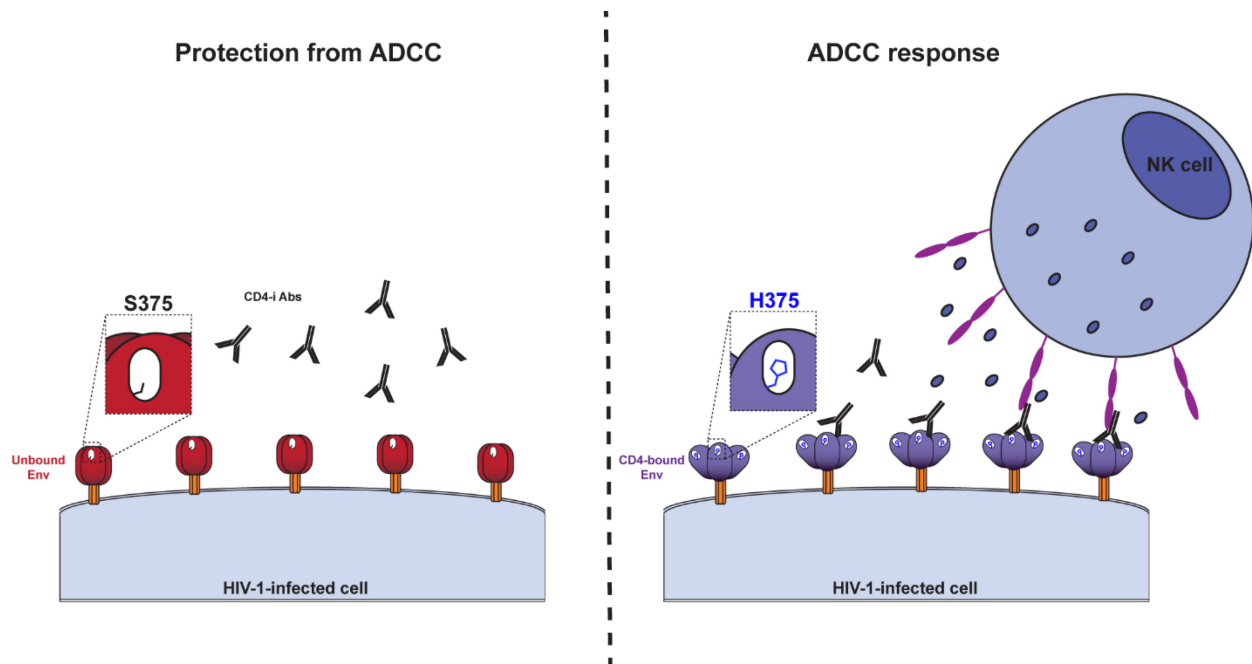
**Figure 4.3.6 - Histidine 375 modulates ADCC responses against CRF01\_AE HIV-1-infected cells mediated by the A32 antibody and HIV<sup>+</sup> sera.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with WT and H375S mutant CRF01\_AE transmitted-founder HIV-1 (IMC 703357) were used as target cells and autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in our FACS-based ADCC assay, as described in Materials and Methods. Shown are the percentages of ADCC activity by A32 (A) or by antibodies in sera from HIV-1 clade B-infected (B) or CRF01\_AE HIV-1-infected (C) individuals. These results are representative of data from at least 4 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means  $\pm$  standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested by using an unpaired two-tailed t test for A32 or a paired two-tailed t test for HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (\*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ).



**Figure 4.3.7 - Histidine 375 modulates ADCC responses against CRF01\_AE HIV-1-infected cells mediated by antibodies isolated from RV144 vaccinees.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with the WT or the H375S variant of CRF01\_AE transmitted-founder HIV-1 (IMC 703357) were used as target cells, with autologous PBMCs as effector cells, in our FACS-based ADCC assay. Shown are the percentages of ADCC activity in the presence of the A32-blockable monoclonal antibodies (CH29, CH38, CH40, CH51, CH52, CH54, CH77, CH80, CH81, CH89, CH91, and CH94) isolated from RV144 vaccinees. These results are representative of those obtained in at least 5 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means. Statistical significance was tested by using an unpaired two-tailed t test (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001).



**Figure 4.3.8 - The Phe43 cavity modulates HIV-1 Env conformation and ADCC responses.** Flanking the Phe43 cavity, the identity of residue 375 modulates the transition of Env to the CD4-bound conformation. The presence of a serine residue at this position keeps Env in its unliganded, closed state (state 1), thus preventing the exposure of highly conserved epitopes recognized by anti-cluster A antibodies. The presence of a larger residue within the cavity, such as the naturally occurring histidine at position 375, shifts Env conformation to a state closer to the CD4-bound state, thus more readily exposing cluster A epitopes and enhancing the susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC mediated by antibodies in HIV<sup>+</sup> sera.

**Table 4.3.1 - Characteristics of HIV-1 clade B-infected sera donors**

Donor ID	CD4 count (cells / mm <sup>3</sup> )	Viral load (copies / ml)
1	410	260
2	692	<50
3	680	633
4	620	<40
5	580	1477
6	670	58475
7	592	13520
8	810	42
9	780	949
10	1307	3387
11	780	905
12	800	7206
13	747	3098
14	920	277
15	790	22045
16	1009	67
17	830	674
18	1029	3779
19	647	961
20	420	1112
21	460	180763



**Table 4.3.2 - Characteristics of HIV-1 CRF01\_AE-infected sera donors**

Donor ID	CD4 count (cells / mm <sup>3</sup> )	Viral load (copies / ml)
1	436	29600
2	200	87300
3	775	<40
4	266	43700
5	119	9260
6	369	<50
7	505	2470
8	208	<50
9	690	<50
10	358	<50
11	76	14000
12	610	<40
13	529	<50
14	362	1450
15	282	<50
16	488	67
17	180	<50
18	448	<40
19	424	61
20	273	<50
21	519	<50
22	388	<50
23	413	<40

**CHAPITRE V - RÔLE DE LA PROTÉINE ACCESSOIRE  
VPU DANS LA RÉPONSE ADCC**

## 5.1 Préambule

Dans ce chapitre, nous caractérisons la polyfonctionnalité de Vpu lui permettant de promouvoir l'évasion de la réponse humorale non-neutralisante en antagonisant CD4 et BST-2, ainsi que la réponse cytotoxique directe médiée par les cellules NK en ciblant NTB-A et PVR. En comprenant les déterminants dictant la capacité de Vpu à cibler toutes ces protéines transmembranaires simultanément, nous avons pu établir que certains de ces substrats sont ciblés de manière préférentielle. À partir de ces informations, nous avons développé des stratégies pour augmenter l'élimination des cellules infectées par ADCC en affectant directement la polyfonctionnalité de Vpu ou en contournant son effet protecteur en augmentant le potentiel antiviral des nnAbs. Dans l'**article 8**, nous avons observé que les IFN-I empêchaient Vpu de moduler à la baisse les niveaux de surface de NTB-A et PVR, mais pas de BST-2 ou CD4. Comme BST-2 et CD4 sont préférentiellement ciblés par Vpu, l'augmentation de BST-2 par les IFN-I a pour effet de compétitionner pour la liaison au domaine transmembranaire de Vpu, nécessaire pour l'interaction et la régulation négative de NTB-A et PVR. Puisque ceux-ci sont des ligands pour les récepteurs activateurs NTB-A et DNAM-1, qui agissent également comme corécepteurs de CD16, le traitement par les IFN-I sensibilise les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 aux réponses cytotoxiques directes et dépendantes des anticorps médiées par les cellules NK. Dans l'**article 9**, nous avons étudié l'importance de Vpu pour évader la réponse nnAbs dans le contexte d'une infection *in vivo*. Une étude publiée en 2017 par *Horwitz et al.* a démontré que les nnAbs peuvent altérer le cours de l'infection via leurs fonctions effectrices Fc-dépendantes dans un modèle de souris humanisée. Afin de comprendre ce phénotype, nous nous sommes intéressés plus particulièrement au virus utilisé dans cette étude. Celui-ci s'est avéré être dépourvu de l'expression du gène *vpu*, ce qui pourrait être responsable de la capacité des nnAbs à éliminer efficacement les cellules infectées dans ce modèle *in vivo*. En effet, lorsque nous avons rétabli l'expression de Vpu, les cellules infectées deviennent résistantes aux réponses effectrices médiée par les nnAbs *in vitro* et la charge virale n'est plus affectée par les nnAbs chez des souris humanisées. Afin de rendre les nnAbs plus efficaces à médier l'ADCC contre un virus de type sauvage, nous avons optimisé une stratégie permettant d'exposer Env dans sa conformation « ouverte » et d'augmenter l'interaction avec le récepteur CD16 des cellules effectrices.

## **ARTICLE 8**

**L'augmentation de l'expression de BST-2 par les interférons de type I réduit la capacité de Vpu à protéger les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 des réponses cytotoxiques médiées les cellules NK**

***Upregulation of BST-2 by Type I Interferons Reduces the Capacity of Vpu To Protect HIV-1-Infected Cells from NK Cell Responses***

**Auteurs:**

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**Contribution des auteurs:**

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### 5.2.1 RÉSUMÉ

La protéine accessoire Vpu du VIH-1 favorise le relargage viral en régulant négativement le facteur de restriction BST-2. En plus, Vpu favorise l'évasion des cellules NK en modulant à la baisse les niveaux de surface des protéines NTB-A et PVR, ligands connus des récepteurs des cellules NK NTB-A et DNAM-1, respectivement. Bien qu'il ait été établi que le domaine transmembranaire (TMD) de Vpu est nécessaire pour l'interaction et la séquestration intracellulaire de BST-2, NTB-A et PVR, la manière dont Vpu parvient à cibler ces protéines simultanément n'est pas claire. Dans cette étude, nous montrons que lorsqu'augmenté, BST-2 est préférentiellement ciblé par Vpu par rapport à ses autres substrats. Nous avons constaté que la régulation à la hausse de la BST-2 par l'interféron de type I (IFN) réduit considérablement la capacité de Vpu à réguler à la baisse NTB-A et PVR. Nos résultats suggèrent que l'occupation du TMD de Vpu par BST-2 affecte sa capacité à réguler négativement d'autres substrats dépendant du TMD. En conséquence, la suppression de BST-2 augmente la capacité de Vpu à réguler négativement NTB-A et PVR en présence d'IFN de type I. De plus, nous montrons que l'expression du BST-2 humain, mais pas celle de son orthologue chez le macaque, diminue la capacité de Vpu à réguler négativement NTB-A. Nous montrons également que les IFN de type I sensibilisent efficacement les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 aux réponses directes et dépendantes des anticorps des cellules NK médiées par NTB-A et DNAM-1. Dans l'ensemble, nos résultats révèlent que les IFN de type I diminuent la polyfonctionnalité de Vpu, réduisant ainsi sa capacité à protéger les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 des réponses cytotoxiques médiées par les cellules NK.

### 5.2.2 ABSTRACT

The HIV-1 accessory protein Vpu enhances viral release by counteracting the restriction factor BST-2. Furthermore, Vpu promotes NK cell evasion by downmodulating cell surface NTB-A and PVR, known ligands of the NK cell receptors NTB-A and DNAM-1, respectively. While it has been established that Vpu's transmembrane domain (TMD) is required for the interaction and intracellular sequestration of BST-2, NTB-A, and PVR, it remains unclear how Vpu manages to target these proteins simultaneously. In this study, we show that upon upregulation, BST-2 is preferentially downregulated by Vpu over its other TMD substrates. We found that type I interferon (IFN)-mediated BST-2 upregulation greatly impairs the ability of Vpu to downregulate NTB-A and PVR. Our results suggest that occupation of Vpu by BST-2 affects its ability to

downregulate other TMD substrates. Accordingly, knockdown of BST-2 increases Vpu's potency to downmodulate NTB-A and PVR in the presence of type I IFN treatment. Moreover, we show that expression of human BST-2, but not that of the macaque orthologue, decreases Vpu's capacity to downregulate NTB-A. Importantly, we show that type I IFNs efficiently sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to NTB-A- and DNAM-1-mediated direct and antibody-dependent NK cell responses. Altogether, our results reveal that type I IFNs decrease Vpu's polyfunctionality, thus reducing its capacity to protect HIV-1-infected cells from NK cell responses.

### **5.2.3 IMPORTANCE**

The restriction factor BST-2 and the NK cell ligands NTB-A and PVR are among a growing list of membrane proteins found to be downregulated by HIV-1 Vpu. BST-2 antagonism enhances viral release, while NTB-A and PVR downmodulation contributes to NK cell evasion. However, it remains unclear how Vpu can target multiple cellular factors simultaneously. Here we provide evidence that under physiological conditions, BST-2 is preferentially targeted by Vpu over NTB-A and PVR. Specifically, we show that type I IFNs decrease Vpu's polyfunctionality by upregulating BST-2, thus reducing its capacity to protect HIV-1-infected cells from NK cell responses. This indicates that there is a hierarchy of Vpu substrates upon IFN treatment, revealing that for the virus, targeting BST-2 as part of its resistance to IFN takes precedence over evading NK cell responses. This reveals a potential weakness in HIV-1's immunoevasion mechanisms that may be exploited therapeutically to harness NK cell responses against HIV-1.

### **5.2.4 INTRODUCTION**

Robust type I interferon (IFN) responses are among the earliest host immune defenses observed during acute HIV-1 infection (1). Interferons play a central role in early antiviral immune responses and efficiently suppress HIV-1 replication in vitro. A part of their antiviral activity depends on the induction of interferon-stimulated genes (ISGs), including restriction factors, such as APOBEC3, TRIM5, SAMHD1, or BST-2 (bone marrow stromal cell antigen 2), that inhibit various steps of the viral replication cycle (2). For instance, BST-2, also known as Tetherin, CD317, or HM1.24, inhibits the release of HIV-1 by trapping newly formed virions at the surface of infected cells (3, 4). BST-2 is a dimeric glycoprotein that consists of an N-terminal cytoplasmic tail, a conventional transmembrane (TM) alpha-helix, a coiled-coil extracellular domain, and a C-

terminal glycosylphosphatidylinositol (GPI) anchor (5, 6). This unique topology allows BST-2 dimers to cross-link budding virions at the surface of infected cells by incorporating one of their membrane-associated domains into the viral membrane, preferentially the GPI anchor, while the other membrane-associated domain remains associated with the cell membrane (7).

BST-2 antagonism is a highly conserved function among primate lentiviruses (8). In the case of HIV-1, the small accessory protein Vpu acts as a viral antagonist of BST-2 (3, 4). Vpu-mediated BST-2 downregulation requires a physical interaction between the transmembrane domains (TMDs) of the two proteins (9–11). This interaction is mediated by residues A10, A14, A18, and W22 from the highly conserved alanine face of the TMD of Vpu (9, 10). Although the precise mechanism(s) used by Vpu to antagonize BST-2 is not completely understood, the current consensus points toward a subversion of BST-2 trafficking. Vpu has been shown to block newly synthesized as well as recycled BST-2 from trafficking to the plasma membrane (12, 13). To achieve this, Vpu hijacks the AP-1-dependent membrane trafficking pathway and forces BST-2 into clathrin-rich domains of endosomes and the *trans*-Golgi network (TGN) (14–16). Subsequently, Vpu targets BST-2 to an ESCRT-dependent endosomal degradation pathway through a mechanism that depends on a highly conserved DSGNES motif located in the cytoplasmic tail of Vpu (17–19). Phosphorylation of the serine residues of this motif allows the recruitment of the  $\beta$ -TrCP subunit of the SCF <sup>$\beta$ -TrCP1/2</sup> E3 ubiquitin ligase complex, leading to the ubiquitination and degradation of BST-2 in lysosomes (20, 21). Increasing evidence suggests that the recruitment of  $\beta$ -TrCP and the degradation of BST-2 by Vpu are dissociable from its ability to antagonize BST-2 (11, 14, 15, 18, 19, 22), although this is subject to debate (23).

In addition to BST-2, Vpu downmodulates a variety of cellular transmembrane proteins, including the viral receptor CD4 (24, 25) and proteins involved in NK cell-mediated immune responses (26, 27). Vpu contributes to NK cell evasion by downmodulating the NK cell ligands NTB-A and PVR from the surface of HIV-1-infected cells (26, 27). NTB-A (NK, T, and B cell antigen, also known as CD352 and SLAMF6) is a type 1 TM protein that belongs to the signaling lymphocytic activation molecules (SLAM) family of receptors found on the surface of all human NK, T, and B cells (28). One interesting feature of this family of receptors is their preference for homophilic interactions. In NK cells, NTB-A functions as a coactivating receptor, and a



homophilic NTB-A–NTB-A interaction triggers NK cell cytotoxicity (29, 30). The downregulation of NTB-A from the surface of HIV-1-infected cells by Vpu was found to prevent NK cell degranulation, thus protecting infected cells from NK cell-mediated lysis (27). Unlike BST-2, Vpu does not enhance NTB-A degradation (27, 31). Instead, Vpu seems to alter the anterograde trafficking of NTB-A, resulting in its sequestration in perinuclear compartments (31). Vpu's anti-NTB-A activity also appears to require a physical interaction between the TMDs of the two proteins (27).

PVR (polio virus receptor, also known as CD155) is a nectin-like protein that serves as a specific ligand for DNAM-1 (DNAX accessory molecule 1, also known as CD226), an adhesion molecule expressed by multiple cell types, including NK and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells. DNAM-1 functions as an activating NK cell receptor, and consequently, its stimulation enhances NK cell-mediated cytotoxicity and cytokine production (32, 33). To reduce the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to NK cell-mediated lysis, Vpu and Nef were shown to downregulate cell surface PVR in an additive manner (26). Similar to the fate of NTB-A in the presence of Vpu, PVR accumulates within perinuclear compartments upon Vpu expression (34). Interestingly, Vpu-mediated downregulation of PVR depends on the same key TM residues, A10, A14, and A18, known to be crucial for BST-2 interaction (34).

While it has been established that Vpu's TMD is required for the interaction and intracellular sequestration of BST-2, NTB-A, and PVR, it remains unclear how Vpu manages to target these different proteins using the same TMD. In this study, we show that the upregulation of BST-2 by type I IFNs greatly impairs the ability of Vpu to downregulate NTB-A and PVR from the surface of infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells. Accumulation of NTB-A and PVR at the surface of HIV-1-infected cells leads to an enhancement in direct and antibody (Ab)-dependent NK cell-mediated killing.

## 5.2.5 RESULTS

### Type I IFNs enhance NTB-A and PVR levels at the surface of HIV-1-infected cells.

Since Vpu utilizes the same domain to target BST-2, NTB-A, and PVR, we speculated that the upregulation of one of these substrates could affect/compete with the downregulation of the other substrates. As BST-2 is an ISG, we decided to upregulate its expression using type I IFNs. Activated primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells isolated from healthy HIV-1-negative individuals were mock infected or infected with the transmitted/ founder (TF) virus CH58 (CH58 TF). At 24 h post-infection, cells were treated or not with type I IFNs (alpha2a interferon [IFN- $\alpha$ 2a] or IFN- $\beta$ ), and the cell surface levels of the three TM proteins were monitored 24 h after IFN treatment by flow cytometry (see **Fig. 5.1.S1** in the supplemental material). In the absence of IFN treatment, the virus was able to downregulate the three TM proteins from the surface of infected (p24-positive [p24<sup>+</sup>]) cells, in contrast to uninfected p24-negative (p24<sup>-</sup>) cells (**Fig. 5.1.1A and B**), in a Vpu-dependent manner (**Fig. 5.1.S2**). Strikingly, IFN- $\alpha$ 2a or IFN- $\beta$  treatment significantly abrogated the ability of the virus to downregulate NTB-A and PVR, but not BST-2, from the cell surface (**Fig. 1A and B**). As previously reported ([35](#)), BST-2 levels on all cell populations were significantly enhanced upon IFN- $\alpha$ 2a or IFN- $\beta$  treatment, but this increase was less pronounced on the infected p24 cells (**Fig. 5.1.1C and D**), suggesting that the virus still manages to downregulate this restriction factor upon type I IFN treatment (**Fig. 5.1.1B**). On the other hand, even though NTB-A and PVR levels stayed relatively stable on mock-infected and uninfected bystander cells, the levels for these two ligands at the surface of infected cells were significantly enhanced upon IFN- $\alpha$ 2a or IFN- $\beta$  treatment (**Fig. 5.1.1C and D**). Similar results were obtained with different IFN- $\alpha$  subtypes (IFN- $\alpha$ 1, IFN- $\alpha$ 6, IFN- $\alpha$ 8, IFN- $\alpha$ 14, IFN- $\alpha$ 16, and IFN- $\alpha$ 17), and their ability to upregulate NTB-A and PVR positively correlated with their capacity to enhance BST-2 levels in p24<sup>+</sup> cells (**Fig. 5.1.1E**). Among all type I IFNs tested, IFN- $\beta$  was identified to be the most potent cytokine mediating the upregulation of these three substrates. Therefore, this cytokine was subsequently used to test additional viruses. Similar results were obtained using a panel of transmitted/founder (TF) and 6-month (6mo) consensus and chronic (Chr) viruses from clades B and C (**Fig. 5.1.2**). Enhancement of cell surface BST-2, NTB-A, and PVR was observed with all viruses tested upon treatment with IFN- $\beta$  (**Fig. 5.1.2A**). Again, from the three TM proteins tested, BST-2 remained the only one to be efficiently downregulated by all the viruses (**Fig. 5.1.2B**). In agreement with the results shown

in **Fig. 5.1.1E**, a strong positive correlation between BST-2 levels and cell surface NTB-A and PVR was observed (**Fig. 5.1.2C**). Altogether, these results demonstrate that type I IFNs affect the capacity of HIV-1 to downregulate NTB-A and PVR.

### **Type I IFNs reduce the capacity of Vpu to downregulate NTB-A and PVR.**

Since Vpu is involved in BST-2, NTB-A, and PVR downregulation (**Fig. 5.1.S2**), we further investigated the role of this accessory protein in the observed phenotype. Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with either wildtype (WT) or *vpu*-defective CH58 TF viruses, and the effect of IFN- $\beta$  on cell surface expression of NTB-A and PVR was evaluated by flow cytometry. Consistent with the data shown in **Fig. 5.1.1 and 5.1.2**, IFN- significantly enhanced NTB-A and PVR levels on WT-infected cells (**Fig. 5.1.3A to C**). In contrast, no significant increase was observed when cells were infected with the *vpu*-defective virus, suggesting that the effect of IFN- treatment depends on Vpu expression. The HIV-1 accessory protein Nef contributes to HIV-1-mediated PVR downregulation but not NTB-A or BST-2 downregulation (**Fig. 5.1.S2**). To evaluate the effect of IFN- on Nef-mediated PVR downregulation, we also tested the effect of IFN- treatment on cells infected with a *nef*-defective variant of CH58 TF. In contrast to Vpu, Nef expression did not alter the capacity of IFN- to enhance cell surface NTB-A and PVR (**Fig. 5.1.3A to C**). Taken together, these data suggest that IFN- impairs specifically the ability of Vpu to downregulate the NK cell ligands NTB-A and PVR, but not BST-2.

### **BST-2 impairs Vpu's ability to downregulate cell surface NTB-A and PVR.**

Since only BST-2 remains efficiently downregulated by Vpu upon IFN treatment, we explored the role of a Vpu–BST-2 functional interaction in the IFN-induced upregulation of NTB-A and PVR. Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, mock infected or infected with HIV-1 CH58 TF, were electroporated with small interfering RNAs (siRNAs) targeting BST-2 mRNA or nontargeting (NT) siRNAs prior to IFN- $\beta$  treatment. Electroporation with siRNA targeting BST-2 prevented IFN-induced BST-2 upregulation in the context of both mock-infected and CH58 TF-infected cells (**Fig. 5.1.4A and B**). While BST-2 knockdown had no effect on NTB-A and PVR expression in mock-infected cells, it significantly reduced the enhancement of cell surface NTB-A and PVR detected upon type I IFN treatment in infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) cells. This suggests that Vpu partially recovers its ability to downregulate these NK cell ligands upon IFN treatment, provided that BST-

2 is depleted. Of note, BST-2 levels and cell surface NTB-A or PVR expression correlated significantly (**Fig. 5.1.4C**). These results demonstrate that Vpu's ability to downregulate cell surface NTB-A and PVR can be impaired in a BST-2-dependent manner.

To evaluate if BST-2 expression is sufficient to impair Vpu's ability to downregulate NTB-A, we co-transfected HEK293T cells with plasmids coding for Vpu, NTB-A, and human or rhesus macaque BST-2. Rhesus macaque BST-2 cannot be counteracted by HIV-1 Vpu due to key mutations in its TMD ([36](#), [37](#)). In this system, we observed a robust Vpu-mediated NTB-A downregulation (**Fig. 5.1.5A**). In agreement with results obtained with infected primary cells, increasing amounts of human BST-2 but not of rhesus macaque BST-2 progressively abrogated the ability of Vpu to downregulate NTB-A (**Fig. 5.1.5A**). This confirms that BST-2 expression is sufficient to abrogate the capacity of Vpu to target NTB-A, provided that the BST-2 being expressed is susceptible to Vpu.

To evaluate if this phenotype was specific to BST-2 expression, we determined whether enhanced expression of NTB-A affected the ability of Vpu to counteract BST-2 and enhance viral release. As expected, BST-2 expression potently reduced HIV-1 particle release, and this was partially overcome by Vpu (**Fig. 5.1.5B**). In contrast to the impact of BST-2 expression on Vpu-mediated NTB-A downregulation, increasing amounts of NTB-A did not affect the capacity of Vpu to enhance viral release upon BST-2 expression (**Fig. 5.1.5B**). Consistent with these findings, electroporation of siRNA against NTB-A did not enhance the capacity of Vpu to control BST-2 or PVR cell surface levels in the absence or presence of type I IFNs (**Fig. 5.1.5C**). These observations support a model where Vpu preferentially targets BST-2 over NTB-A.

### **BST-2 upregulation by type I IFNs affects the ability of Vpu to downmodulate CD62L but not CD4.**

To confirm that BST-2 expression affects the ability of Vpu to downregulate substrates that depend on its TMD, we evaluated the effect of IFN- treatment on two other Vpu substrates: CD4 and CD62L. Consistent with the involvement of the cytoplasmic domain of Vpu for CD4 downregulation and not its TMD ([38](#)), CD4 levels on HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were not affected by IFN- treatment (**Fig. 5.1.6A**) even in the absence of Nef (**Fig. 5.1.S3**). In contrast,

IFN- $\beta$  treatment significantly enhanced the cell surface levels of CD62L (**Fig. 5.1.6A**). As expected, mutation of Vpu's TMD (A14L/A18L) abrogated Vpu's capacity to downregulate CD62L but not CD4, confirming the requirement of Vpu's TMD for Vpu-mediated CD62L downregulation (**Fig. 5.1.6B**). We then characterized CD62L expression in mock-infected, bystander, and infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells. We found that IFN- $\beta$  enhanced CD62L expression on all these populations but did so more significantly on the infected cell population (**Fig. 5.1.7A and B**). Similar to what we observed for NTB-A and PVR, IFN- $\beta$  specifically impaired the ability of Vpu to downregulate CD62L, and this activity was significantly enhanced by BST-2 depletion (**Fig. 5.1.7C to E**). In summary, these results suggest that occupation of Vpu's TMD by BST-2 affects Vpu's capacity to target multiple substrates.

### **IFN- $\beta$ sensitizes HIV-1-infected cells to NK cell responses in an NTB-A- and DNAM-1-dependent manner.**

To evaluate the functional consequences of type I IFN-mediated impairment of NTB-A and PVR downregulation, we characterized their contribution in stimulating NK cell cytotoxic activity using a redirection degranulation assay. Fc gamma receptor-positive (Fc $\gamma$ R<sup>+</sup>) P815 cells were incubated with antibodies known to engage NTB-A or DNAM-1 or with their matched IgG isotypes. The cells were then incubated with human primary NK cells. In this assay, the Fc portion of the Ab interacts with the Fc $\gamma$ R present on P815 target cells, thus allowing NK cell activation through a single receptor or a combination of receptors (here, NTB-A and/or DNAM-1). NK cell degranulation was monitored by detection of cell surface CD107a. Consistent with previous reports (39), the stimulation of either NTB-A or DNAM-1 receptors alone was not sufficient to trigger NK cell degranulation (**Fig. 5.1.8A**). However, the combination of NTB-A and DNAM-1 Abs resulted in a significant increase in NK cell degranulation (**Fig. 5.1.8A and B**), indicating that there is a functional interplay between these receptors to stimulate NK cells. Accordingly, we found that these receptors also positively modulated NK-mediated antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) (**Fig. 5.1.8C and D**). Even though stimulation through CD16 was sufficient to induce NK cell degranulation, addition of an anti-NTB-A Ab, an anti-DNAM-1 Ab, or both increased significantly the magnitude of NK cell degranulation (**Fig. 5.1.8C and D**). Altogether, these results indicate that the stimulation of NK cells via DNAM-1 and NTB-A is sufficient to trigger both direct and Ab-dependent NK cell responses.

The potential contribution of NTB-A and PVR in HIV-1-infected cell susceptibility to NK cells was evaluated using a direct killing assay. Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with CH58 TF WT virus or its *vpu*-defective counterpart were used as targets in the presence of increasing amounts of autologous primary NK cells. Confirming the protective effect of Vpu expression on NK cell-mediated killing (26, 27), WT-infected cells were less susceptible to autologous NK cell responses than cells infected with a *vpu*-defective virus (Fig. 5.1.9A). Interestingly, treatment of WT-infected cells with IFN- $\beta$  significantly increased their susceptibility to autologous NK cell lysis (Fig. 5.1.9A) to levels similar to those reached with *vpu*-defective virus-infected cells. Strikingly, this increase in direct NK cell lysis could be abrogated when NK cells were preincubated with a combination of blocking antibodies against the NK cell receptors NTB-A and DNAM-1 (Fig. 5.1.9A). Similarly, the capacity of 3BNC117, a broadly neutralizing antibody (bNAbs; targeting the CD4-binding site), to mediate ADCC against HIV-1-infected cells was significantly enhanced upon IFN- $\beta$  treatment (Fig. 5.1.9B). IFN-treated infected cells remained less susceptible to ADCC than cells infected with a *vpu*-defective virus. This is consistent with the capacity of the WT virus to downregulate BST-2 despite IFN treatment (Fig. 5.1.1A and B). BST-2 downregulation facilitates viral release, thus decreasing the accumulation of Env at the cell surface (Fig. 5.1.S4). However, the ADCC responses directed against WT-infected cells treated with IFN or cells infected with a *vpu*-defective virus were significantly decreased by the addition of blocking antibodies against NTB-A and DNAM-1 (Fig. 5.1.9B). Taken together, these results reveal that IFN- enhances the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to autologous NK cell responses in an NTB-A- and DNAM-1-dependent manner.

## 5.2.6 DISCUSSION

Vpu is known to downregulate several membrane proteins from the cell surface of HIV-1-infected CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells. The TMD of Vpu has been shown to be required to downregulate several of them, including BST-2 (9–11), NTB-A (27), PVR (34), and CD62L (Fig. 5.1.6). How Vpu manages to target these different substrates using the same domain has not been established. Here we provide the first evidence that under physiologically relevant conditions, BST-2 is preferentially downregulated by Vpu over its other TMD substrates. Specifically, we show that type I IFNs decrease Vpu's polyfunctionality by upregulating BST-2, thus reducing its capacity to

downmodulate the NK cell ligands NTB-A and PVR. Importantly, we show that type I IFNs efficiently sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to both direct and antibody-dependent NK cell responses.

Our results support a model in which the specific occupancy of Vpu's TMD by BST-2 prevents its ability to target other TM proteins. Consistent with this model, Vpu's ability to downregulate CD4 was not affected by IFN- $\beta$  treatment. This activity of Vpu involves the cytoplasmic domain of the viral protein rather than its TMD (38) (Fig. 5.1.6B). Consequently, the capacity of Vpu to target CD4 is unlikely to be impacted by the occupation of its TMD by BST-2. While studies have suggested that the Vpu–BST-2 interaction could occur within post-endoplasmic reticulum membranes (40), we cannot rule out the possibility that Vpu could also interact with CD4 and BST-2 in a successive manner. However, supporting our model, we found that the IFN-induced upregulation of BST-2 affected the ability of Vpu to downmodulate another substrate that depends on the integrity of Vpu's TMD: the CD62L homing receptor (Fig. 5.1.6 and 5.1.7). Our findings therefore raise the intriguing possibility that numerous Vpu functions relying on its TMD could be affected by the upregulation of BST-2. One distinctive feature of group M Vpu proteins is their capacity to target BST-2 to an ESCRT-dependent endosomal degradation pathway. However, increasing evidence suggests that BST-2 counteraction by Vpu results from the subversion of BST-2 trafficking prior to its degradation. While BST-2 degradation by Vpu does not appear to be required to counteract BST-2 (11, 14, 15, 18, 19, 22), it could represent an effective mechanism to unleash Vpu's TMD to interact with other cellular substrates. One could speculate that Vpu's polyfunctionality could therefore rely on its ability to degrade BST-2.

Our results provide the first indication that there is a hierarchy of Vpu targets under type I IFN responses. In contrast to NTB-A, PVR, and CD62L, both CD4 and BST-2 remain efficiently targeted by Vpu despite IFN treatment, which further supports the notion that these two proteins represent the major targets of Vpu (Fig. 5.1.1, 5.1.2, and 5.1.6). BST-2 counteraction and CD4 downregulation were found to be critical for viral egress and immune evasion. Vpu antagonism of BST-2 plays a crucial role in enhancing virus replication and release in human CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, particularly in the presence of IFN (41). This activity of Vpu was recently identified to be a major determinant of HIV-1 IFN resistance (41). CD4 degradation by Vpu also participates in the release of fully infectious viral particles by preventing the intracellular interaction between

CD4 and Env (24, 25). Finally, both of Vpu's activities contribute to protect HIV-1-infected cells from ADCC responses by preventing the exposure of ADCC-mediating Env epitopes (42).

The reason for this preference of Vpu for BST-2 over NTB-A and PVR remains to be determined. One can speculate that Vpu's TMD could have a higher affinity for BST-2's TMD than for NTB-A's or PVR's TMD. A recent study by Cole et al. characterized the heterooligomer formation between the TMD of Vpu and its substrates in a lipid environment using Förster resonance energy transfer (FRET) (43). Data from this study show that peptides of Vpu's TMD have a lower affinity for TMD peptides of NTB-A, PVR, and BST-2 than for known TM helix dimers (43). The interaction between Vpu and dimeric BST-2, however, remained more energetically favorable than Vpu-NTB-A and Vpu-PVR interactions, potentially due to the additive effects of multiple TMD-TMD interactions (43). BST-2 forms disulfide-linked dimers, and BST-2 dimerization is required for its antiviral function (7, 44-46). The preference of Vpu for BST-2 could therefore result from its higher affinity for BST-2 dimers than for other monomeric substrates. In the study of Cole et al., PVR and NTB-A TMDs were found to compete with BST-2 TMD for the binding of the Vpu TMD peptide in a lipid environment (43). It is possible that this reduced Vpu-BST-2 interaction detected in the presence of NTB-A's or PVR's TMD is not sufficient to have a significant impact on Vpu function. This apparent contradiction could be explained if the affinity of TMD peptides artificially embedded in a lipid environment did not recapitulate the affinity and/or function of this domain expressed within the full protein. In that regard, our results using infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells or Vpu-expressing cells revealed that NTB-A expression has no effect on the capacity of Vpu to antagonize BST-2 (**Fig. 5.1.5B and C**). Inversely, BST-2 expression greatly reduced the capacity of Vpu to downregulate NTB-A and PVR (**Fig. 5.1.4 and 5.1.5**).

HIV/simian immunodeficiency virus infection is followed by an intense cytokine storm involving type I IFNs. An intact IFN response during the acute phase of infection appears to be crucial for viral control (47). While BST-2 expression is upregulated upon HIV-1 infection by endogenous type I IFNs, a recent study revealed that basal BST-2 levels are sufficient to suppress HIV-1 replication (48). The counteraction of BST-2 by Vpu consequently confers a selective advantage for viral spread *in vivo*, at least in humanized mice (48-50). Our observation that Vpu



preferentially targets BST-2 over other TM proteins (NTB-A, PVR, and CD62L) upon IFN treatment raises the possibility that the polyfunctionality of Vpu could be reduced during acute HIV-1 infection. The upregulation of BST-2 observed during this stage of infection (47, 48) could impact the capacity of Vpu to target multiple TM proteins. This could explain why studies using humanized mouse models of acute HIV-1 infection failed to detect the Vpu-mediated downregulation of NTB-A *in vivo*, despite detecting it *in vitro* (49, 50). In these mouse models, strong type I IFN responses and subsequent BST-2 upregulation were detected upon HIV-1 infection (48). It is then conceivable that the capacity of Vpu to target NTB-A *in vivo* could have been impacted by type I IFN-mediated BST-2 upregulation. Resistance to type I IFNs represents a key determinant of HIV-1 transmission fitness. Transmitted/founder (TF) viruses are phenotypically distinct, and increased IFN resistance represents their most distinguishing property (41, 51–54). However, resistance to IFNs is not static during the course of HIV-1 infection. Previous studies revealed that IFN resistance declines rapidly within the first 6 months of infection (53, 54) but then tends to increase again at later stages of disease progression (53). In this study, we found that type I IFNs affect the downregulation of NTB-A and PVR by HIV-1, including by viruses that differ in their sensitivity to IFNs (Fig. 5.1.2). All tested viruses, including TF, 6-month, and chronic viruses, were found to be sensitive, at different levels, to this IFN activity. This suggests that type I IFNs could differentially affect Vpu polyfunctionality at different stages of infection. Future studies using longitudinally linked viruses are needed to determine whether the capacity of Vpu to downmodulate NTB-A and PVR upon IFN treatment varies during the course of infection.

We also found that type I IFNs enhance the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to NK cell responses. We demonstrated that stimulation of human NK cells via the NTB-A and DNAM-1 receptors is sufficient to induce NK cell degranulation. We also provide evidence that NTB-A and DNAM-1 are critical players for NK cell-mediated ADCC. We found that there is a functional interplay between these receptors together with CD16 to enhance NK cell degranulation, suggesting that they act as coreceptors of CD16. By preventing Vpu's ability to downregulate NTB-A and PVR, type I IFNs impair Vpu's capacity to protect infected cells from NK responses. Importantly, we found that type I IFNs efficiently sensitize cells infected with an IFN-resistant TF virus (CH58 TF) (41, 53, 54) to autologous NK cell lysis. This suggests that, for the virus, targeting

BST-2 as part of its resistance to type I IFNs takes precedence over protecting HIV-1-infected cells from NK cell responses, at least early in infection, when type I IFN responses play an important role in systemic viral control.

Our findings further support the idea that type I IFNs could be utilized to harness NK cell responses against HIV-1-infected cells. Stimulation with IFN- $\alpha$  was found to augment NK cell cytokine secretion, polyfunctionality, and degranulation, as well as the capacity of NK cells to lyse autologous HIV-1-infected cells (55–57). Additionally, type I IFNs enhance the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC responses by increasing the level of ADCC-mediating Env epitopes on infected cells (35, 58). Now we demonstrate that this increase in ADCC responses also depends on the capacity of type I IFNs to prevent Vpu-mediated NTB-A and PVR downmodulation (**Fig. 5.1.9B**). Altogether, this suggests that type I IFNs could both directly enhance NK cell effector function and also augment the susceptibility of infected cells to NK cells. Interestingly, administration of IFN- $\alpha$  during chronic HIV-1 infection was found to enhance BST-2 expression and tended to decrease HIV-1 replication (59–61). Studies also revealed that treatment with IFN- $\alpha$  leads to a moderate but sustained decline of integrated HIV-1 DNA in CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells (60, 62). While all studies to date in chronic infection have used IFN- $\alpha$ 2a, other IFN- $\alpha$  subtypes, as well as IFN- $\beta$ , have been shown to be more potent at upregulating BST-2 and restricting HIV-1 infection (**Fig. 5.1.1**) (52, 63, 64). Consequently, whether these cytokines would have a more pronounced effect on viral replication and the clearance of the viral reservoir *in vivo* remains to be determined.

In summary, we demonstrate that type I IFN-mediated upregulation of BST-2 greatly impairs Vpu's polyfunctionality. Upon type I IFN treatment, Vpu preferentially targets BST-2 over the NK cell ligands NTB-A and PVR, thus reducing its ability to protect HIV-1-infected cells from NK cell responses.

## 5.2.7 MATERIALS AND METHODS

### **Ethics statement**

Written informed consent was obtained from all study participants, and the research adhered to the ethical guidelines of CRCHUM and was reviewed and approved by the CRCHUM Institutional

Review Board (Ethics Committee approval number CE 16.164-CA). The research adhered to the standards indicated by the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants were adults and provided informed written consent prior to enrollment, in accordance with Institutional Review Board approval.

### **Cell culture and isolation of primary cells.**

HEK293T human embryonic kidney cells and P815 mouse lymphoblast-like mastocytoma cells (obtained from ATCC) were grown as previously described ([39](#), [65](#)). Primary human peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs), CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, and NK cells were isolated, activated, and cultured as previously described ([66](#), [67](#)). Briefly, PBMCs were obtained by Ficoll density gradient from whole-blood samples obtained from 9 different HIV-1-negative donors. CD4<sup>+</sup> T lymphocytes and NK cells were purified from resting PBMCs by negative selection using immunomagnetic beads per the manufacturer's instructions (StemCell Technologies, Vancouver, BC, Canada). CD4 T cells were activated with phytohemagglutinin-L (10 µg/ml) for 48 h and then maintained in RPMI 1640 complete medium supplemented with recombinant interleukin-2 (100 U/ml; R&D Systems) (see **Fig. 5.1.S1** in the supplemental material). NK cells were isolated and rested overnight in RPMI 1640 complete medium on the day prior to the redirection and killing assays.

### **Proviral constructs and plasmids**

Transmitted/founder (TF) viruses and the corresponding 6-month (6mo) consensus and chronic (Chr) infectious molecular clones (IMCs) of patients CH40, CH58, CH77, CH167, CH198, CH236, CH470, CH505, CH850, and STCO were inferred, constructed, and biologically characterized ([51](#), [53](#), [68–71](#)). CH58 IMCs defective for Vpu and/or Nef expression or harboring the TMD mutations A14L/A18L, as well as the NL4.3 proviral construct defective for Vpu expression, were previously described ([41](#), [72](#), [73](#)). The plasmids expressing hemagglutinin (HA)-tagged Vpu 2\_87 (pCR3.1- Vpu2\_87-HA), human BST-2 (pCR3.1-human Tetherin), rhesus macaque BST-2 (pCR3.1-rhesus Tetherin), NTB-A (pQCXIP\_human SLAMF6/NTB-A), or green fluorescent protein (GFP) (pCR3.1-GFP) were previously described ([14](#), [36](#), [74](#)).

### **Viral production and infections**

To achieve similar levels of infection among all viruses tested, vesicular stomatitis virus G (VSV-G)-pseudotyped HIV-1 isolates were produced in HEK293T cells and titrated in activated primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells to achieve a 10 to 20% infection. Viruses were then used to infect activated primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from healthy HIV-1-negative donors by spin infection at 800 × g for 1 h in 96-well plates at 25°C. All experiments using VSV-G-pseudotyped HIV-1 isolates were done in a biosafety level 3 laboratory following manipulation protocols accepted by the CRCHUM Biosafety Committee, which respects the requirements of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

### **Antibodies**

A detailed list of the Abs used for cell surface staining and measurement of NK cell responses is presented in Text S1 in the supplemental material.

### **Flow cytometry analysis of cell surface staining**

Cell surface stainings were performed as previously described ([66](#)) and detailed in **Text S1** in the supplemental material. The percentage of BST-2, NTB-A, and PVR levels detected on infected p24<sup>+</sup> cells relative to uninfected p24<sup>-</sup> cells was calculated with the following formula: (MFI detected on p24<sup>+</sup> cells/MFI detected on p24<sup>-</sup> cells) × 100, where MFI represents the mean fluorescence intensity.

### **Type I IFN treatments**

Type I IFNs were titrated to identify the optimal concentrations that efficiently enhanced cell surface BST-2 levels on HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells. IFN-β (Rebif; EMD Serono Inc.) ([52](#)) was added to the cells at 1 ng/ml. All different IFN-α subtypes tested (PBL Assay Science) were reconstituted in RPMI 1640 complete medium at 1 × 10<sup>7</sup> U/ml, aliquoted, and stored at -80°C. IFN-α was then added to the cells at 1,000 U/ml. Type I IFNs were added to the cells at 24 h post-infection, 24 h before cell surface staining or killing assays.

### **siRNA electroporation**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells mock infected or infected with CH58 TF were electroporated with pools of 4 siRNAs to silence BST-2 (ON-TARGETplus Human BST-2 siRNA-SMART pool; Dharmacon) or NTB-A (ON-TARGETplus Human SLAMF6 siRNA-SMART pool; Dharmacon)

expression. Briefly, at 24 h post-infection, infected or mock-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were resuspended at a concentration of  $5 \times 10^7$  cells/ml in Opti-MEM medium (Invitrogen), and 55  $\mu$ l of the cell suspension was transferred into a 1-mm electroporation cuvette (Harvard Apparatus). Pools of nontargeting (NT) siRNA or siRNA targeting BST-2 or NTB-A sequences were then added to the cells (150 pmol/ $3 \times 10^6$  cells). Further, cells were electroporated at 250 V for 2 ms using a BTX Gemini X2 electroporation system (Harvard Apparatus). Subsequently, electroporated cells were resuspended in RPMI 1640 complete medium and were treated or not with IFN- $\beta$  (1 ng/ml).

### **BST-2/NTB-A competition assay**

HEK293T cells were seeded at  $1.5 \times 10^5$  cells per well of a 24-well plate the day before transfection. Cells were co-transfected with 50 ng of an NTB-A-expressing plasmid (pQCXIP\_human SLAMF6/NTB-A), 40 ng of an Vpu-expressing plasmid (pCR3.1-Vpu2\_87-HA), and 150 ng of a GFP-expressing plasmid (pCR3.1-GFP) in the presence of increasing concentrations of human or rhesus macaque BST-2-expressing plasmids (pCR3.1-human Tetherin or pCR3.1-rhesus Tetherin) (0, 10, 20, 50, 100 or 200 ng) using the Lipofectamine 2000 reagent (Invitrogen). At 2 days post-transfection, cell surface NTB-A levels were monitored by flow cytometry as described above. The fluorescence of stained cells was detected by two-color flow cytometry, and Vpu-mediated NTB-A downmodulation was calculated as described previously (74). Briefly, the mean fluorescence intensities were determined for cells showing specific ranges of GFP expression. The fluorescence values obtained for cells co-transfected with the NTB-A, Vpu, and GFP expressors with or without the human or rhesus macaque BST-2 expressors were compared with the corresponding values for number obtained for cells co-transfected with the NTB-A and GFP expressors to determine the efficiency of NTB-A downmodulation by Vpu. The same GFP gating was used in all calculations.

### **Viral release assay**

Subconfluent HEK293T cells were plated in 24-well plates and transfected with NL4.3  $\Delta$ Vpu proviral construct (500 ng) with or without human the BST-2-expressing plasmid (50 ng; pCR3.1-human Tetherin) in the presence of the Vpu-expressing plasmid (50 ng; pCR3.1-Vpu2\_87-HA) and increasing concentrations of the NTB-A-expressing plasmid (0, 50, 100, and

200 ng; pQCXIP\_human SLAMF6/NTB-A) using 2  $\mu$ l the Lipofectamine 2000 reagent (Thermo Fisher Scientific). The medium was replaced at 16 h post-transfection, and the supernatants were harvested at 24 h after the medium change and filtered. The infectivity of viral supernatants was determined by infecting TZM-bl cells, and  $\beta$ -galactosidase activity was assayed as previously described (14).

### **Measurement of NK cell responses**

Direct and antibody-dependent NK cell responses were measured using the NK cell redirection degranulation assay, the NK cell direct killing assay, and the fluorescence-activated cell sorting (FACS)-based ADCC assay as described in detail in Text S1 in the supplemental material.

### **Statistical analysis**

Statistics were analyzed using GraphPad Prism (version 6.0.1) software (GraphPad, San Diego, CA, USA). Every data set was tested for statistical normality, and this information was used to apply the appropriate (parametric or nonparametric) statistical test. *P* values of < 0.05 were considered significant; significance values are indicated in the figure legends.

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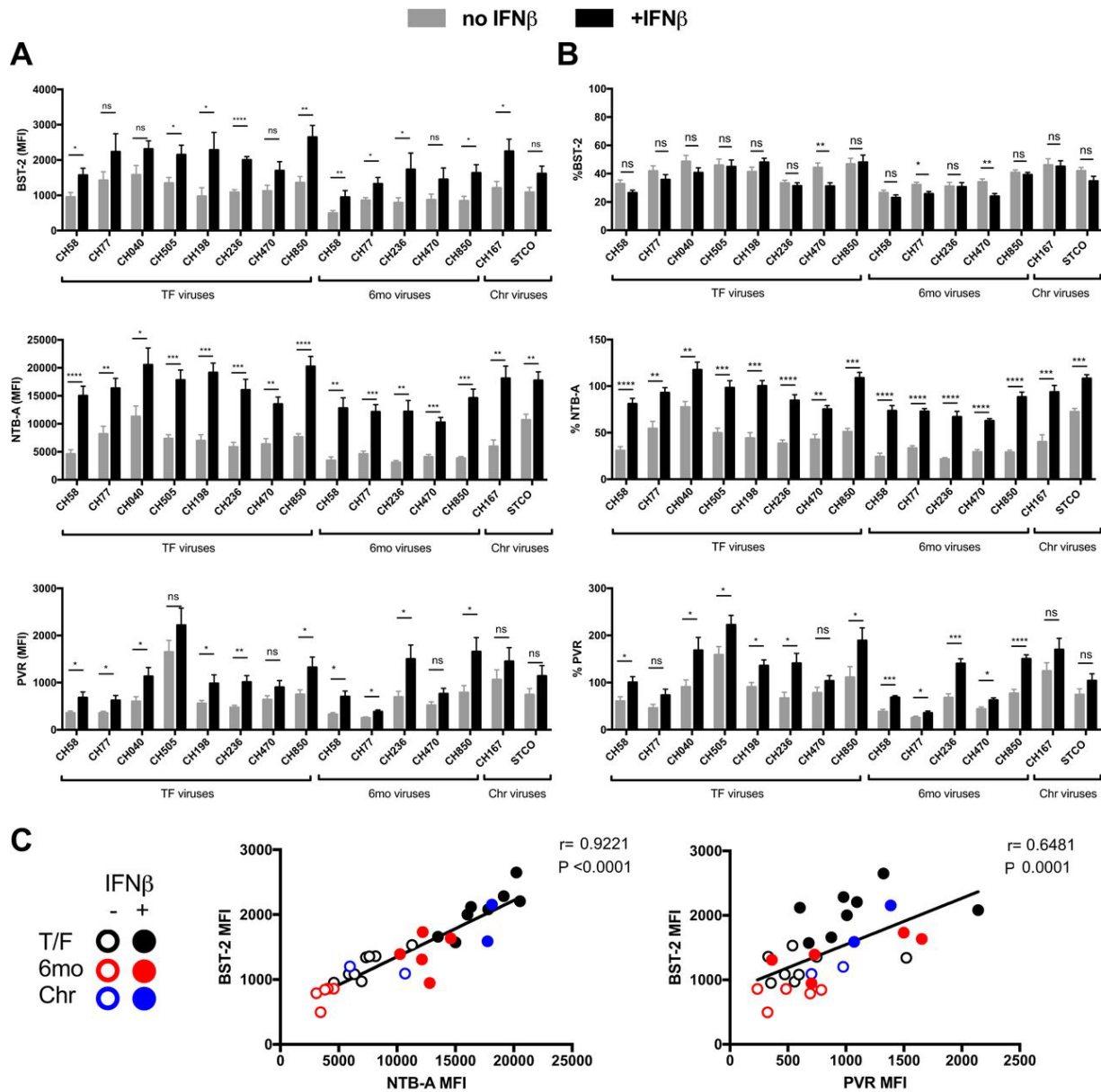
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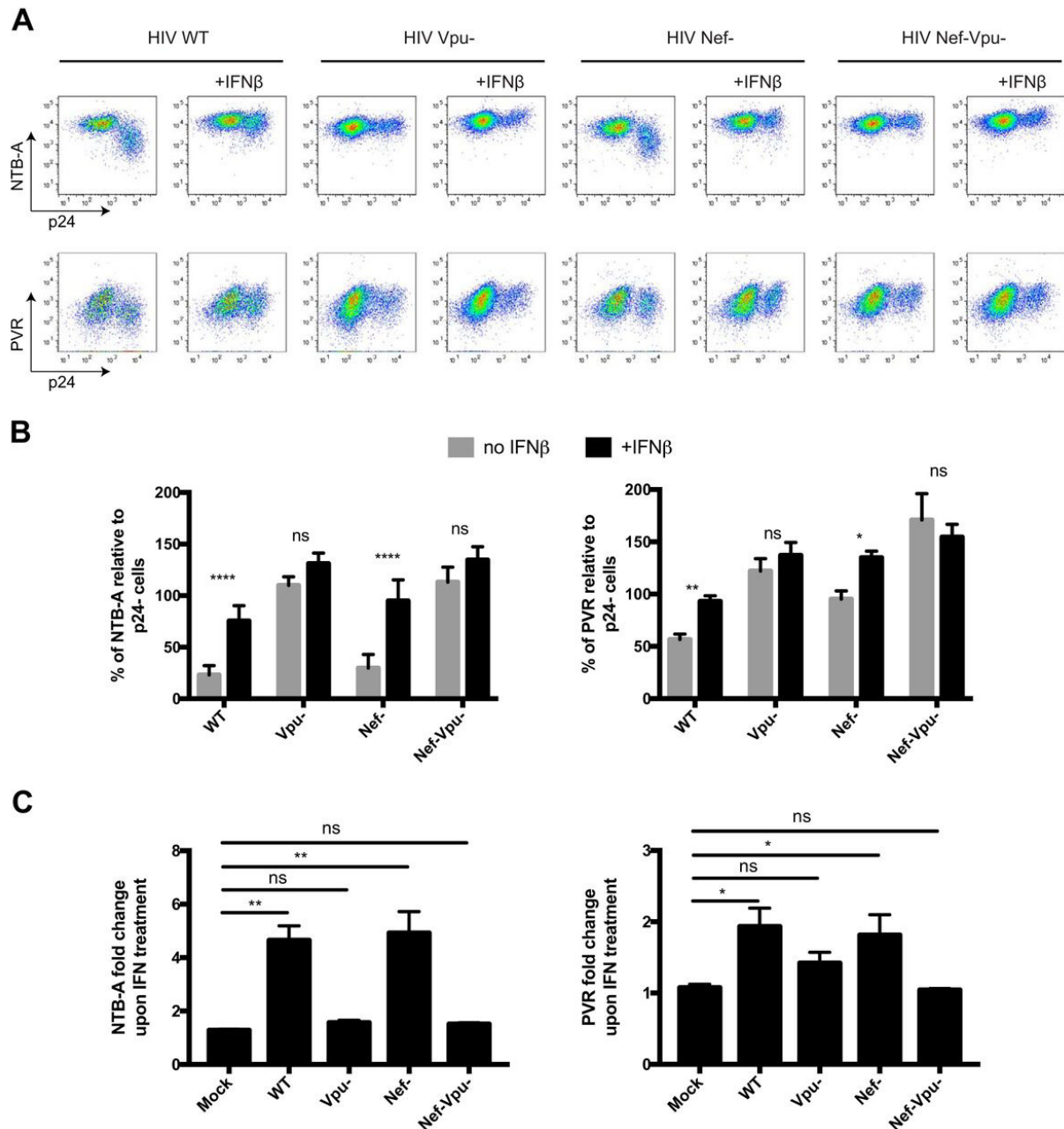
**Figure 5.1.1 - Type I IFNs enhance cell surface NTB-A and PVR on HIV-1-infected cells.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were mock infected or infected with the CH58 transmitted/founder virus (CH58 TF) and either mock treated or treated for 24 h with type I IFNs (IFN- $\alpha$ , IFN- $\beta$ ). At 48 h post-infection, cells were stained with anti-BST-2, anti-NTB-A, or anti-PVR Abs, followed by the appropriate secondary Abs. **(A)** Dot plot depicting representative stainings with or without IFN- $\beta$  treatment. **(B to D)** The graphs shown represent the percentage of median fluorescence intensities (MFI) detected on the p24<sup>+</sup> population over the MFI detected on the p24<sup>-</sup> population **(B)**, the MFI obtained on mock-infected cells, uninfected p24<sup>-</sup> cells, or infected p24<sup>+</sup> cells **(C)**, or the fold change in MFI upon IFN treatment for at least 6 independent experiments **(D)**. Error bars indicate means  $\pm$  standard errors of the means (SEM). Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test or the Mann-Whitney test based on statistical normality (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ; ns, nonsignificant). **(E)** Correlations between the levels of cell surface BST-2 and the levels of NTB-A or PVR on the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) population upon treatment with different type I IFNs was calculated using a Pearson correlation test.



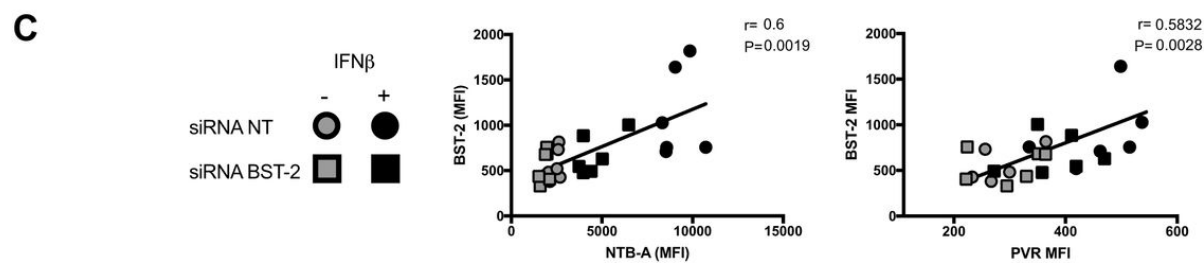
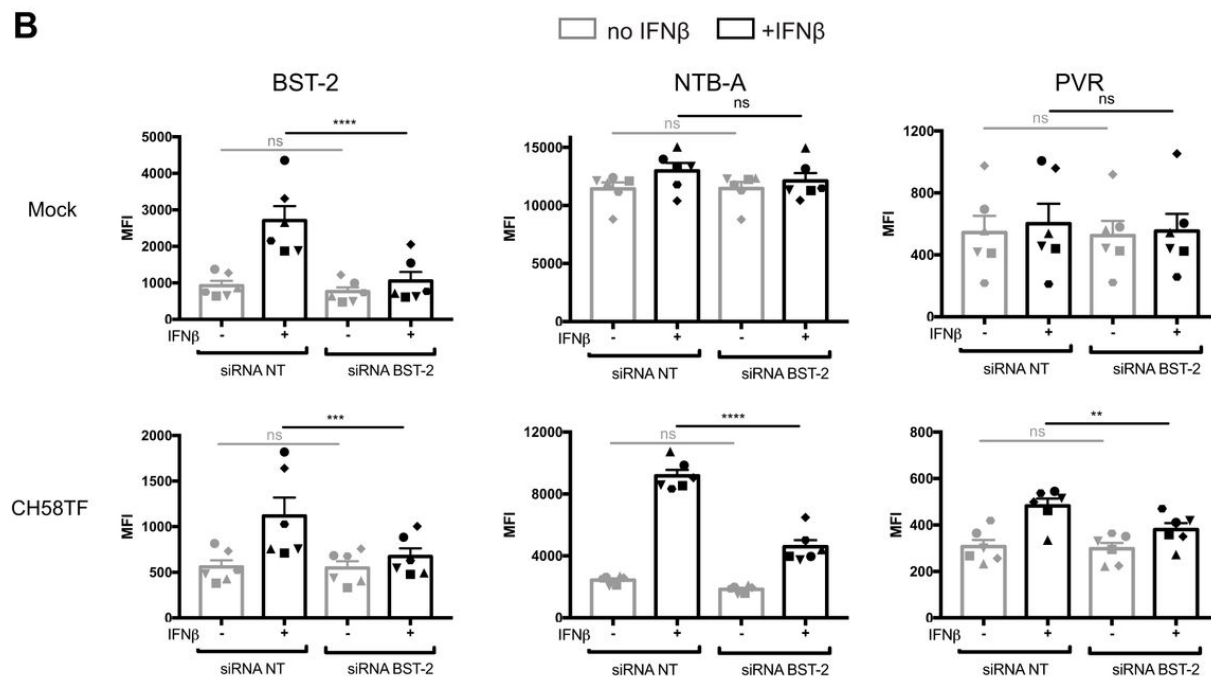
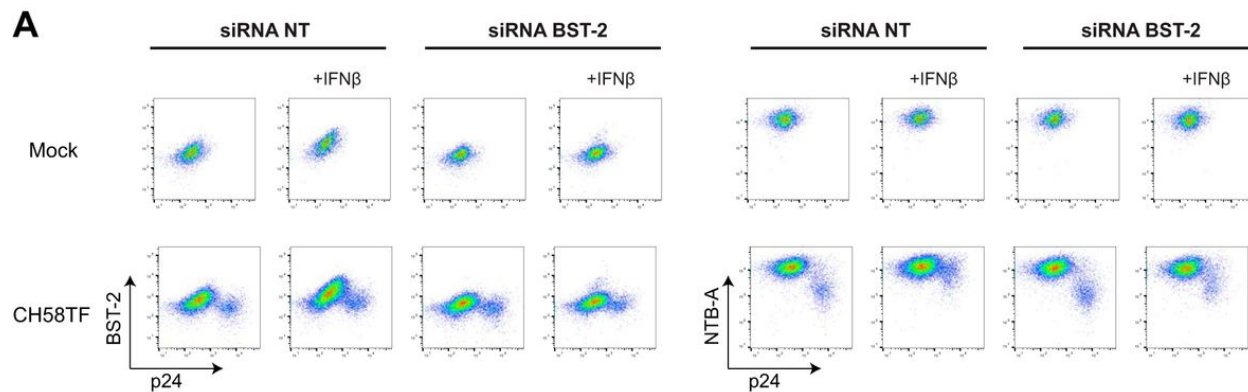
**Figure 5.1.2 - IFN- $\beta$  enhances cell surface NTB-A and PVR on cells infected with TF, 6-month (6mo), and chronic (Chr) viruses.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with different transmitted/founder (TF) (CH58, CH77, CH40, CH505, CH198, CH236, CH470, CH850), 6-month (CH58, CH77, CH236, CH470, CH850), and chronic viruses (CH167, STCO) and either mock treated or treated for 24 h with IFN- $\beta$ . At 48 h post-infection, cells were stained with anti-BST-2, anti-NTB-A, or anti-PVR Abs, followed by the appropriate secondary Abs. The graphs shown represent the MFI obtained on infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) cells (A) or the percentage of the MFI on the p24<sup>+</sup> population over the MFI on the p24<sup>-</sup> population (B). These graphs represent data obtained from at least 5 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means  $\pm$  SEM. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test or the Mann-Whitney test based on statistical normality (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ; ns, nonsignificant). (C) Correlations between the levels of cell surface BST-2 and the levels of NTB-A or PVR on the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) population of the different viruses tested upon treatment with different type I IFNs were tested using the Spearman rank correlation test.

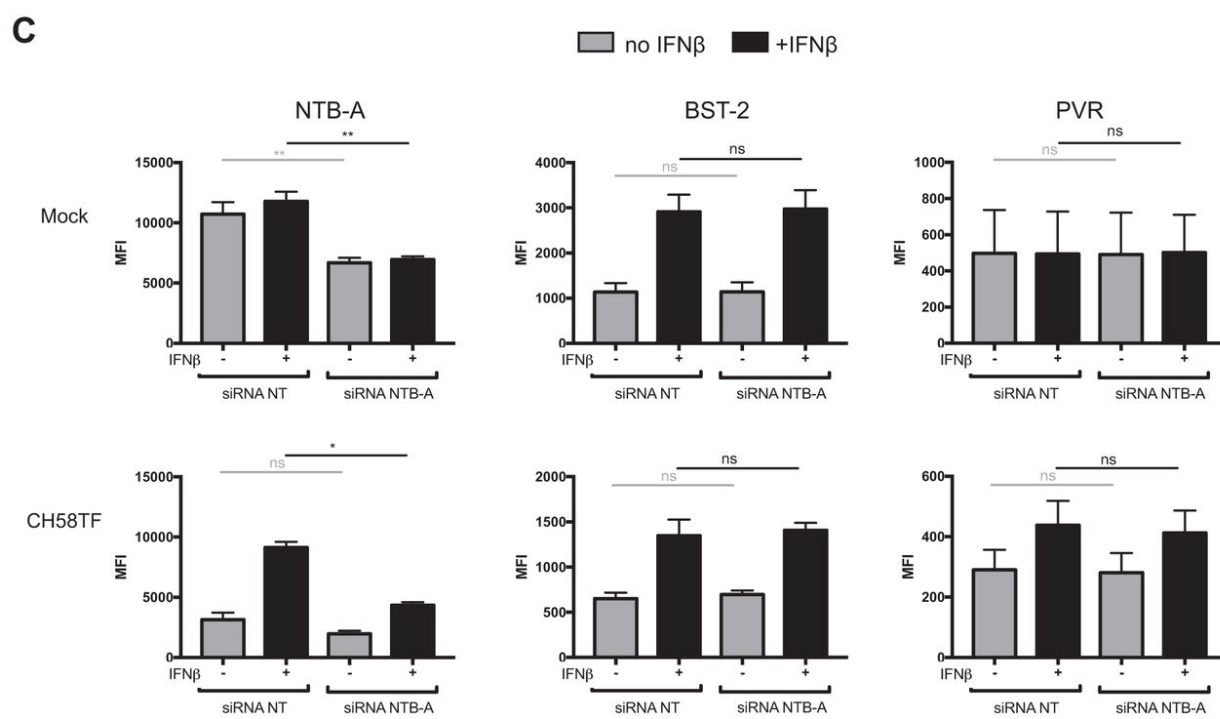
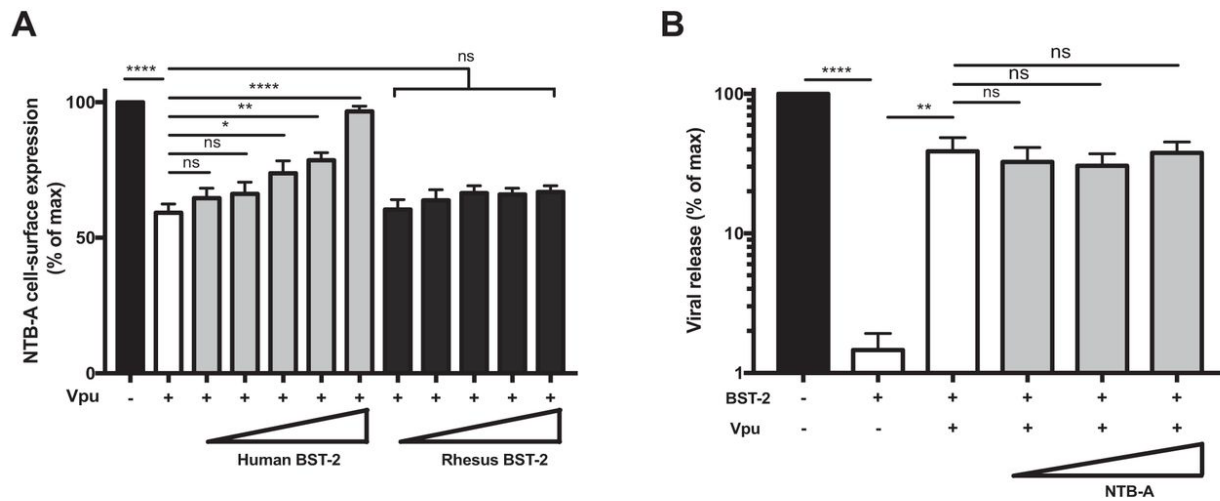


**Figure 5.1.3 - IFN- $\beta$  impairs Vpu's ability to downregulate cell surface NTB-A and PVR.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with CH58 TF virus either WT or defective for Nef and/or Vpu expression. At 24 h post-infection, infected cells were either mock treated or treated for 24 h with IFN- $\beta$ . At 48 h post-infection, cells were stained with anti-NTB-A or anti-PVR Abs, followed by the appropriate secondary Abs. (A) Dot plot depicting representative stainings with or without IFN- $\beta$  treatment. (B and C) The graphs shown represent the percentage of MFI on the p24<sup>+</sup> population over the MFI on the p24<sup>-</sup> population (B) or the fold change in MFI upon IFN treatment on the different populations (C). All graphs shown represent data obtained from at least 5 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means  $\pm$  SEM. Statistical significance was tested using a multiple t test, correcting for multiple comparisons using the Bonferroni-Dunn method (B), and a Kruskal-Wallis test (C) (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ; ns, nonsignificant).

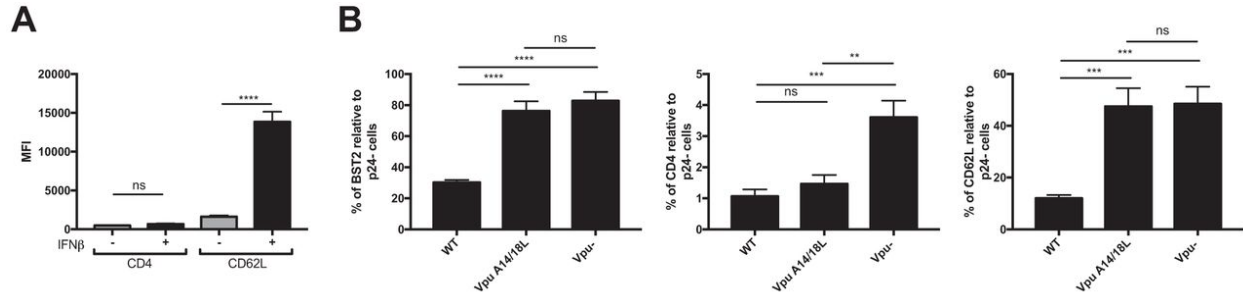


**Figure 5.1.4 - IFN- $\beta$  enhances cell surface NTB-A and PVR in a BST-2-dependent manner.** Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were mock infected or infected with CH58 TF WT virus. At 24 h post-infection, infected cells were electroporated with siRNAs targeting BST-2 mRNA or nontargeting siRNAs, followed by treatment (or not) with IFN-. At 48 h post-infection, cells were stained with anti-BST-2, anti-NTB-A, or anti-PVR Abs, followed by the appropriate secondary Abs. **(A)** Dot plot depicting representative stainings. **(B)** The graphs shown represent the MFI obtained on mock-infected or infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) cells in 6 independent experiments. Statistical significance was tested using a paired one-way analysis of variance (\*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant). **(C)** Correlations between the levels of cell surface BST-2 and the levels of NTB-A or PVR on the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) population upon siRNA electroporation and treatment with IFN $\beta$  were tested using Spearman rank correlation test.



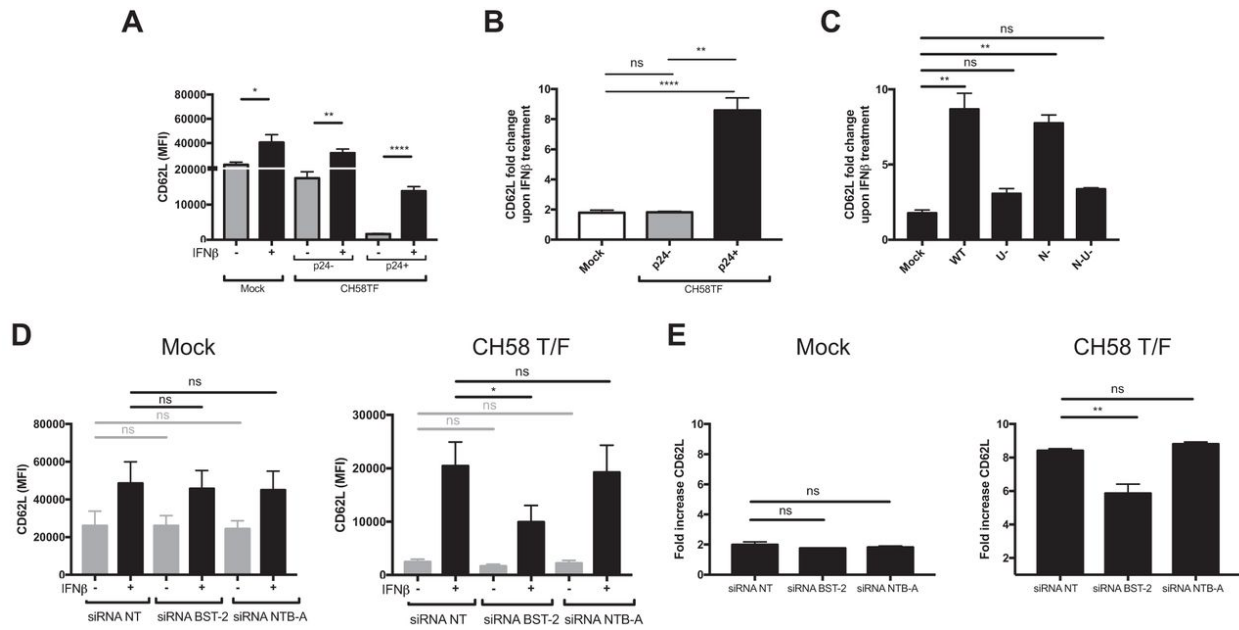
**Figure 5.1.5 - Expression of human BST-2 alone is sufficient to impair the ability of Vpu to downregulate NTB-A.**

(A) HEK293T cells were co-transfected with plasmids expressing Vpu (40 ng), NTB-A (50 ng), and GFP (150 ng) in the presence of increasing concentration of a human or rhesus macaque BST-2 expression vector (0, 10, 20, 50, 100, 200 ng). At 2 days post-transfection, cells were stained with anti-NTB-A Abs, followed by the appropriate secondary Abs. These data sets are representative of those from 5 independent experiments. (B) HEK293T cells were co-transfected with plasmids harboring a NL4.3  $\Delta$ Vpu proviral construct (500 ng), human BST-2 (50 ng), and Vpu (40 ng) in the presence of increasing concentrations of the NTB-A expression vector (0, 50, 100, and 200 ng). Cell culture supernatants containing released infectious virions were harvested at 48 h after transfection and assayed for infectivity on TZM-bl cells. These data sets are representative of those from 4 independent experiments. (C) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were mock infected or infected with CH58 TF WT virus. At 24 h post-infection, infected cells were electroporated with siRNAs targeting NTB-A mRNA or nontargeting siRNAs, followed by treatment (or not) with IFN- $\beta$ . At 48 h post-infection, cells were stained with anti-BST-2, anti-NTB-A, or anti-PVR Abs, followed by the appropriate secondary Abs. The graphs shown represent the MFIs obtained in 3 independent experiments. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test or a Mann-Whitney test based on statistical normality (A and B) or a paired one-way analysis of variance (C) (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).



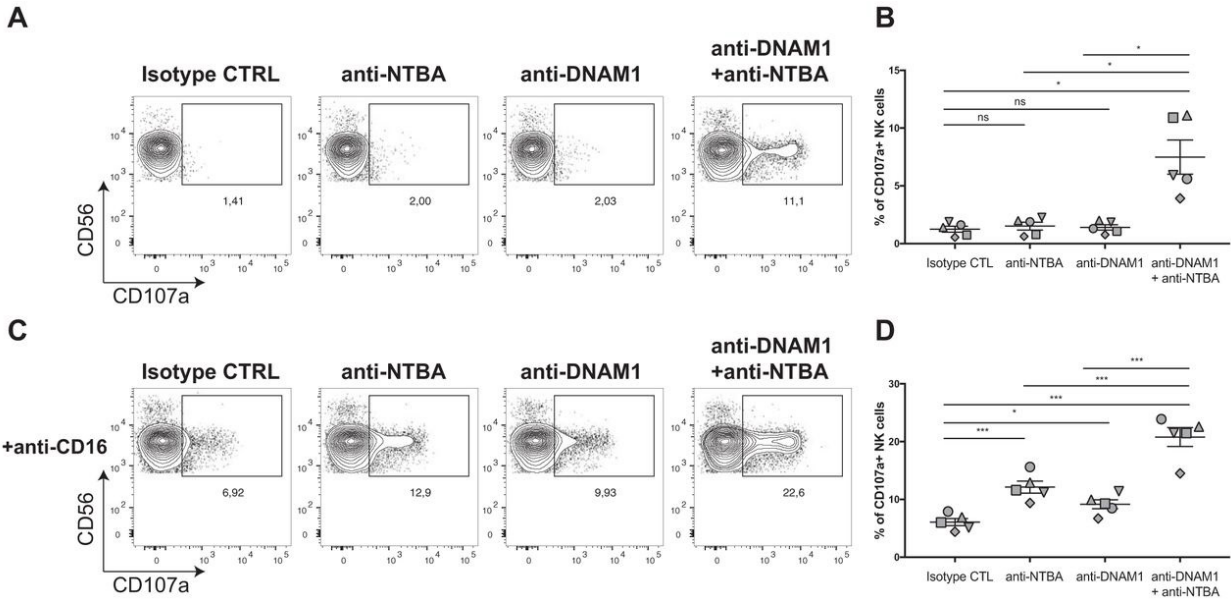
**Figure 5.1.6 - Type I IFNs enhance cell surface CD62L but not CD4 on HIV-1-infected cells.** (A) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with CH58 TF virus and either mock treated or treated for 24 h with IFN- $\beta$ . At 48 h post-infection, cells were stained with anti-CD4 or anti-CD62L Abs, followed by the appropriate secondary Abs. The graph shown represents the median fluorescence intensities (MFI) detected on p24<sup>+</sup> cells. (B) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with CH58 TF virus expressing the Vpu WT or Vpu A14/18L or CH58 TF virus defective for Vpu expression (Vpu<sup>-/-</sup>). At 48 h post-infection, cells were stained with anti-BST-2, anti-CD4, or anti-CD62L Abs, followed by the appropriate secondary Abs. The graphs shown represent the percentage of BST-2, CD4, and CD62L detected on the p24<sup>+</sup> cells relative to the p24<sup>-</sup> cells. All these graphs represent data obtained in at least 6 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means  $\pm$  SEM. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test or the Mann-Whitney test based on statistical normality (\*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).





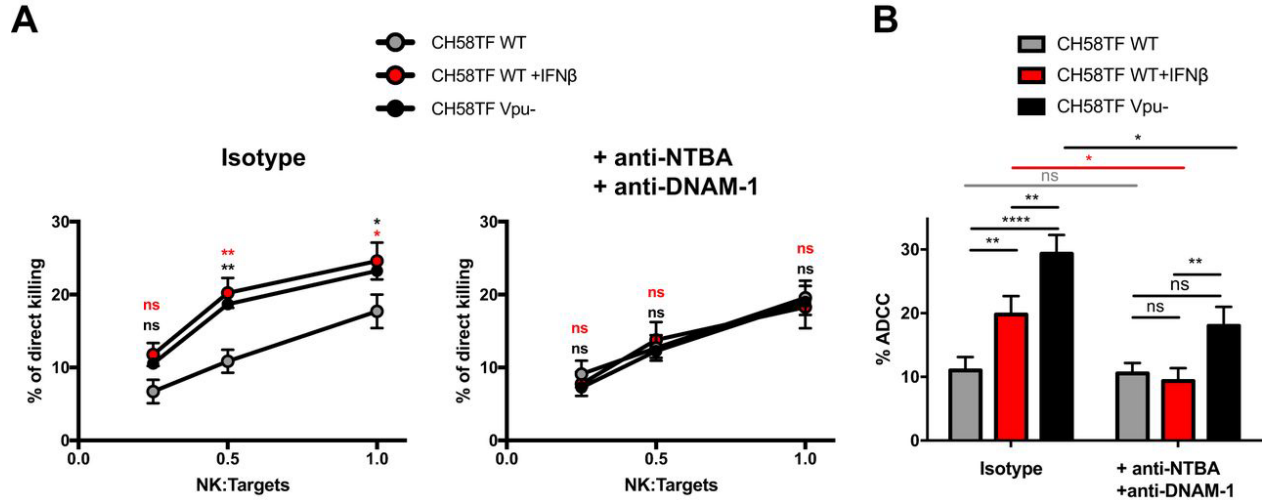
**Figure 5.1.7 - Type I IFN-induced BST-2 upregulation prevents the capacity of Vpu to downregulate CD62L.**

(A to C) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with CH58 TF virus, either WT or defective for Nef and/or Vpu expression. At 24 h post-infection, infected cells were either mock treated or treated for 24 h with IFN-β. At 48 h post-infection, cells were stained with anti-CD62L Abs, followed by the appropriate secondary Abs. (A to C) The graphs shown represent the median fluorescence intensities (MFI) (A), the fold change in MFI upon IFN treatment detected on mock-infected, p24<sup>-</sup>, and p24<sup>+</sup> cells in the context of WT infection (B), and the fold change in MFI upon IFN treatment detected on p24<sup>+</sup> cells in the context of infection with WT virus and virus lacking Vpu (U<sup>-</sup>), Nef (N<sup>-</sup>), and both Nef and Vpu (N-U<sup>-</sup>) (C). (D and E) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were mock infected or infected with CH58 TF WT virus. At 24 h post-infection, cells were electroporated with siRNAs targeting BST-2 or NTB-A mRNA or nontargeting siRNAs, followed by treatment (or not) with IFN-β. At 48 h post-infection, cells were stained with anti-CD62L Abs, followed by the appropriate secondary Abs. The graphs shown represent the median fluorescence intensities (MFI) (D) or the fold change in MFI upon IFN treatment detected on mock-infected or p24<sup>+</sup> virus-infected cells (E). All these graphs represent data obtained in at least 3 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means +/- SEM. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test or the Mann-Whitney test based on statistical normality (A and B), a Kruskal-Wallis test (C), or a paired one-way analysis of variance (D and E) (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).



**Figure 5.1.8 - Stimulation of NK cells via NTB-A and DNAM-1 induces direct and Ab-dependent NK cell responses.**

(A and B) P815 cells were incubated with anti-NTB-A Abs and/or anti-DNAM-1 Abs or a matched IgG isotype control prior to being mixed with purified NK cells and incubated for 4 h. (C and D) Alternatively, P815 cells were also incubated with anti-CD16 Abs. CD3<sup>-</sup> CD56<sup>+</sup> cells were evaluated for the percentage of cell surface CD107a expression. (A and C) Dot plots depict representative NK cell stimulation. (B and D) The graphs shown represent the percentage of CD107a expression among CD3<sup>-</sup> CD56<sup>+</sup> NK cells obtained in 5 independent experiments. Statistical significance was tested using a paired t test (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; ns, nonsignificant). CTRL and CTL, control.



**Figure 5.1.9 - Type I IFNs sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to NK cell responses in an NTB-A- and DNAM-1-dependent manner.**

(A) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with CH58 TF WT virus (treated or not with IFN- $\beta$ ) or its *vpu*-defective counterpart (Vpu) were used as target cells, while autologous NK cells were used as effector cells to perform a direct killing assay. NK cells were preincubated in the presence of anti-NTB-A and anti-DNAM-1 or their matched IgG isotype controls prior to incubation with target cells for 5 h at different NK cell/target cell ratios (1:4, 1:2, 1:1). The graphs shown represent the percentages of direct killing obtained from 3 independent experiments done in triplicate. (B) Alternatively, autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in a well-established FACS-based ADCC assay. Autologous PBMCs were preincubated in the presence of anti-NTB-A and anti-DNAM-1 or their matched IgG isotype controls prior to incubation with target cells for 5 h. The graph shown represents the percentages of ADCC obtained with bNAb 3BNC117 in the presence or absence of blocking Abs. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ; ns, nonsignificant).

## 5.2.11 SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

### Flow cytometry analysis of cell-surface staining

Binding of antibodies to cell-surface NTB-A (10 µg/mL), PVR (10 µg/mL), rabbit polyclonal anti-BST-2 (1:2,000 dilution), CD62L (1 µg/mL), CD4 (1 µg/mL) and anti-HIV-1 Env mAb 3BNC117 (0.5 µg/mL) was performed at 48h post-infection. Infected cells were stained intracellularly for HIV-1 p24, using the Cytotfix/Cytoperm Fixation/ Permeabilization Kit (BD Biosciences, Mississauga, ON, Canada) and the fluorescent anti-p24 mAb (PE-conjugated anti-p24, clone KC57; Beckman Coulter/Immunotech). The percentage of infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup>) was determined by gating the living cell population using a viability dye staining (Aqua Vivid, Thermo Fisher Scientific). Samples were acquired on an LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences), and data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star, Ashland, OR, USA).

### Antibodies

The following Abs were used as primary Abs for cell-surface staining: mouse anti-human CD352 (NTB-A) (clone NT-7, Biolegend), mouse anti-human CD155 (PVR) (clone SKII.4, Biolegend), rabbit polyclonal anti-human BST2 antiserum (NIH AIDS Reagent Program), mouse anti-CD4 (clone OKT4, eBioscience), mouse anti-CD62L (clone LT-TD180, Invitrogen), anti-HIV-1 Env mAb 3BNC117 (NIH AIDS Reagent Program). Goat anti-mouse and anti-human antibodies pre-coupled to Alexa Fluor 647 (Invitrogen) and BrilliantViolet 421-conjugated donkey anti-rabbit antibodies (Biolegend) were used as secondary antibodies in flow cytometry experiments. The following Abs were used for redirection assays and/or killing blockade experiments: PE-anti-human CD56 (clone NCAM16.2, BD Biosciences), APC-anti-human CD107a (clone H4A3, BD Biosciences), BUV395-anti-human CD3 (clone UCHT1, BD Biosciences), mouse anti-human CD352 (NTB-A) (clone NT-7, Biolegend), mouse anti-human CD226 (clone DX11, BD Pharmingen), mouse anti-human CD16 (clone 3G8, Biolegend) and their matched IgG isotype control (clone MOPC-21, Biolegend).

### Redirection assays

P815 cells were incubated with 5 µg/ml of purified anti-NTB-A Abs and/or anti-DNAM-1 Abs or their matched IgG isotype control Abs, in the presence or not of 0.5 µg/ml of anti-CD16

Abs, for 30 min at 4°C. The P815 cells ( $2 \times 10^5$ ) were then mixed with purified NK cells ( $1 \times 10^5$ ) and incubated for 4hr at 37°C, 5% CO<sub>2</sub>. After 4h of coincubation, the cells were stained with fluorochrome-conjugated anti-CD3, CD56 and CD107a. CD3<sup>-</sup> CD56<sup>+</sup> cells were evaluated for the percentage of cell-surface CD107a expression.

### **NK cell direct killing assay**

Infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were stained with a viability dye (AquaVivid; ThermoFisher Scientific) and cell proliferation dye (eFluor670; eBioscience) and used as target cells. Autologous purified NK cells, stained with another cellular marker (cell proliferation dye eFluor450; eBioscience), were added at different NK: target ratios (1:4, 1:2, 1:1) in 96-well V-bottom plates (Corning, Corning, NY). NK cells were preincubated in the presence of anti-NTB-A and anti-DNAM-1 or their matched IgG isotype control (10 µg/mL) prior being incubated with target cells. The plates were subsequently centrifuged for 1 min at 300 × g, and incubated at 37°C, 5% CO<sub>2</sub> for 5 to 6 h before being fixed in a 2% PBS-formaldehyde solution. Infected cells were identified by intracellular staining for HIV-1 p24 as described above. Samples were acquired on an LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences) and data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star). The percentage of direct killing was calculated with the following formula: (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in Targets) – (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in Targets plus Effectors) / (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in Targets) by gating on infected lived target cells.

### **FACS-based ADCC assay**

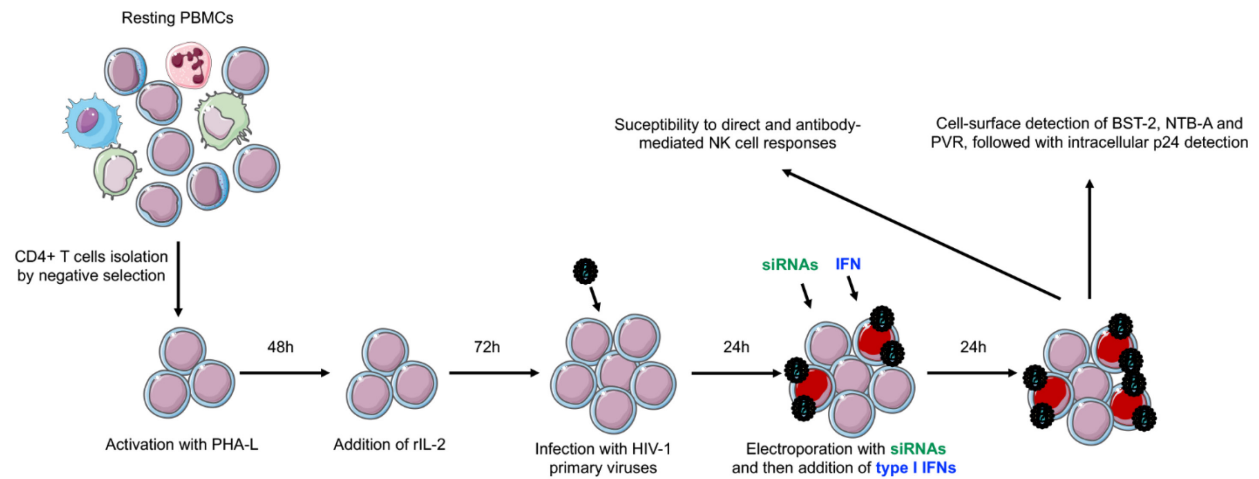
Measurement of ADCC using a FACS-based assay was performed at 48h post-infection as previously described (1). Briefly, infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were stained with viability dye (AquaVivid; ThermoFisher Scientific) and cell proliferation dye (eFluor670; eBioscience) and used as target cells. Autologous PBMC effectors cells, stained with another cellular marker (cell proliferation dye eFluor450; eBioscience), were added at an effector: target ratio of 10:1 in 96-well V-bottom plates (Corning, Corning, NY). ADCC-mediating mAb 3BNC117 (0.5 µg/ml) was added to appropriate wells and cells were incubated for 15 min at room temperature. The plates were subsequently centrifuged for 1 min at 300 × g, and incubated at 37°C, 5% CO<sub>2</sub> for 5 to 6 h before being fixed in a 2% PBS-formaldehyde solution. Infected cells were identified by intracellular staining for HIV-1 p24 as described above. Alternatively, effector cells were

preincubated in the presence of anti-NTB-A and anti-DNAM-1 antibodies or their matched IgG isotype control (10 µg/mL) prior being incubated with target cells for blockade experiments. Samples were acquired on an LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences) and data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star). The percentage of ADCC was calculated with the following formula: (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in Targets plus Effectors) – (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in Targets plus Effectors plus Abs) / (% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in Targets) by gating on infected lived target cells.

#### **5.2.12 SUPPLEMENTAL REFERENCES**

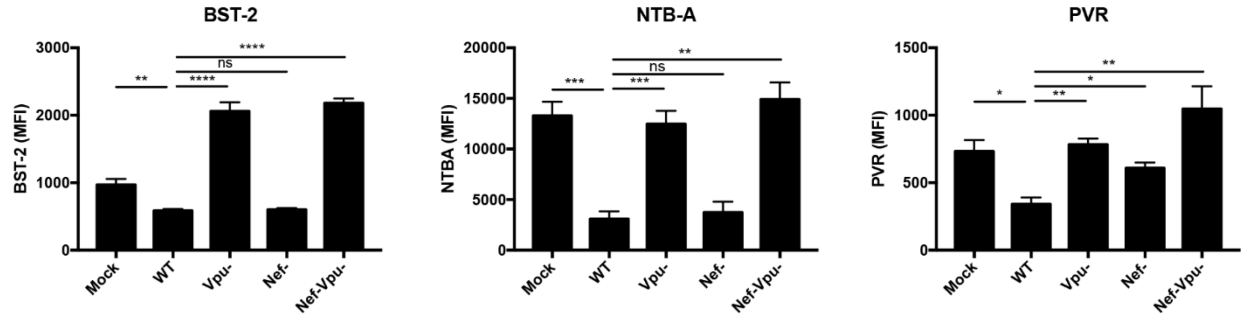
1. Richard J, Veillette M, Brassard N, Iyer SS, Roger M, Martin L, et al. CD4 mimetics sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. 2015;112(20):E2687-94.

## 5.2.13 SUPPLEMENTAL FIGURES



### Figure 5.1.S1 - Experimental procedures.

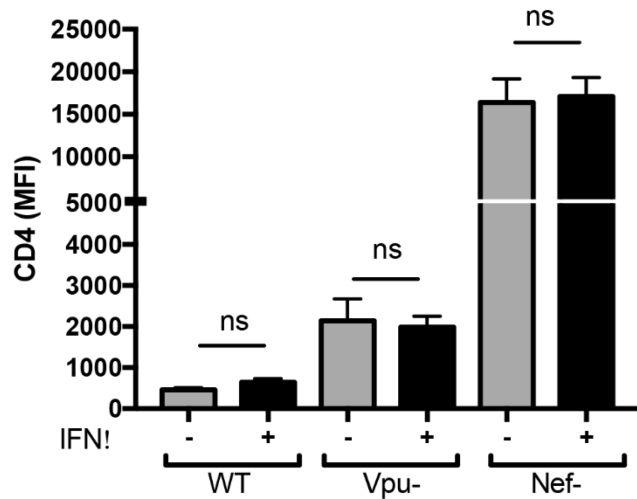
CD4<sup>+</sup> T lymphocytes were purified from resting PBMCs by negative selection using immunomagnetic beads. Purified CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were activated with phytohemagglutinin-L (PHA-L) (10 µg/ mL) for 48 hours and then maintained in RPMI 1640 complete medium supplemented with rIL-2 (100 U/mL) for 72 hours. Activated CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were then infected with VSV-G pseudotyped HIV-1 primary viruses by spin-infection. Twenty hours post-infection, infected cells were electroporated with selected siRNAs prior treatment with type I IFNs. Forty-eight hours post-infection, the susceptibility of infected cells to NK cells responses, as well as cell-surface levels of BST-2, NTB-A and PVR were assessed by flow cytometry.



**Figure 5.1.S2 - Role of Vpu and Nef in HIV-1-mediated downregulation of cell-surface BST-2, NTB-A and PVR.**

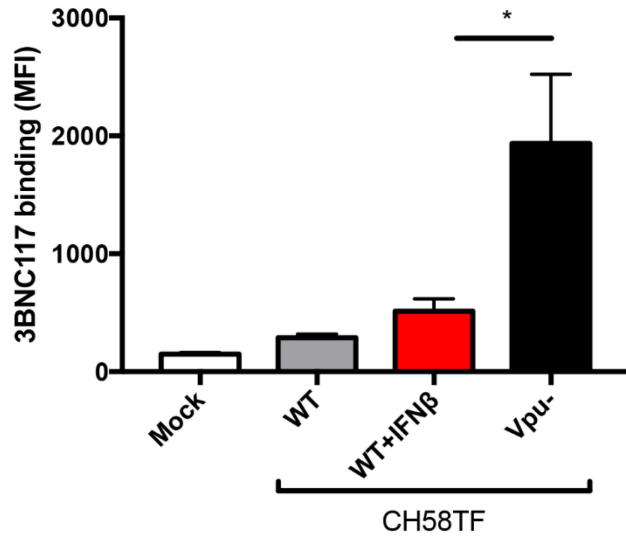
Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with CH58 T/F WT or variants defective for Nef and/or Vpu expression. Forty-eight hours post-infection, cells were stained with anti-BST-2, anti-NTBA or anti-PVR Abs, followed with appropriate secondary Abs. The graphs shown represent the median fluorescence intensities (MFI) detected on p24<sup>-</sup> cells for mock-infected cells and the infected population (p24<sup>+</sup>) for HIV-1-infected cells. Statistical significance was tested using unpaired t test (\*, P < 0.05, \*\*, P < 0.01, \*\*\*, P < 0.001, \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001, ns: non-significant).





**Figure 5.1.S3 - Effect of IFN- $\beta$  on cell-surface CD4 levels.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with CH58 T/F, either WT or defective for Vpu or Nef expression. Twenty-four hours post-infection, infected cells were either mock-treated or treated for 24h with IFN- $\beta$ . Forty-eight hours post-infection, cells were stained with anti-CD4 Abs, followed with appropriate secondary Abs. The graphs shown represent median fluorescence intensities detected on the p24<sup>+</sup> population. Error bars indicate means  $\pm$  SEM. Statistical significance was tested using unpaired t test or Mann-Whitney test based on parametric test (ns: non-significant).



**Figure 5.1.S4 - Recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by bNAb 3BNC117 upon treatment with IFN $\beta$ .**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with CH58 T/F WT (treated or not with IFN- $\beta$  for 24h) or a variant defective for Vpu expression. Forty-eight hours post-infection, cells were stained with anti-Env bNAb 3BNC117 (0.5  $\mu$ g/mL), followed with appropriate secondary Abs. Statistical significance was tested using unpaired t test (\*, P < 0.05)

## **ARTICLE 9**

**La protéine accessoire Vpu du VIH-1 limite les fonctions effectrices des anticorps *in vivo***

## *HIV-1 Vpu restricts Fc-mediated effector functions in vivo*

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### 5.3.1 RÉSUMÉ

Les anticorps non-neutralisants (nnAbs) peuvent éliminer les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 par le biais de la réponse cytotoxique cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCC) et ont été identifiés comme un corrélât de protection dans l'essai vaccinal RV144. Il a récemment été démontré que les fonctions effectrices médiées par les nnAbs peuvent altérer le cours de l'infection par le VIH-1 *in vivo* lorsqu'utilisés contre un virus défectif pour l'expression de la protéine accessoire Vpu. Vpu étant connu pour réguler à la baisse le CD4 à la surface des cellules infectées et que CD4 peut déclencher des changements de conformation de la glycoprotéine de l'enveloppe virale (Env), nous nous sommes demandé si l'absence d'expression de Vpu était liée à l'activité antivirale observée médiée par les nnAbs. Nous avons constaté que la restauration de l'expression de Vpu réduit considérablement la reconnaissance des nnAbs par les cellules infectées, les rendant ainsi résistantes à la réponse ADCC. De plus, l'administration de nnAbs à des souris humanisées réduit la charge virale uniquement chez les animaux infectés par un virus déficient pour Vpu, mais pas par un virus de type sauvage. L'administration de mimétiques moléculaires de CD4, connus pour "ouvrir" Env et exposer les épitopes des nnAbs, rend les virus de type sauvage sensibles aux fonctions effectrices des nnAbs. Enfin, les fonctions effectrices Fc-dépendantes des nnAbs sont observées uniquement sur les cellules exprimant Env dans la conformation "ouverte". Ce travail souligne l'importance de l'évasion de la réponse humorale par Vpu.

### 5.3.2 ABSTRACT

Non-neutralizing antibodies (nnAbs) can eliminate HIV-1-infected cells via antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) and were identified as a correlate of protection in the RV144 vaccine trial. Fc-mediated effector functions of nnAbs were recently shown to alter the course of HIV-1 infection *in vivo* using a *vpu*-defective virus. Since Vpu is known to downregulate cell surface CD4, which triggers conformational changes in the viral envelope glycoprotein (Env), we ask whether the lack of Vpu expression was linked to the observed nnAbs activity. We found that restoring Vpu expression greatly reduces nnAb recognition of infected cells, rendering them resistant to ADCC responses. Moreover, administration of nnAbs in humanized mice reduces viral loads only in animals infected with a *vpu*-defective but not with a wildtype virus. CD4-mimetics administration, known to "open" Env and expose nnAb epitopes, renders wildtype viruses

sensitive to nnAbs Fc-effector functions. This work highlights the importance of Vpu-mediated evasion of humoral responses.

### 5.3.3 INTRODUCTION

Human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1) envelope glycoproteins (Env) mediate viral entry into target cells. Env is synthesized as a trimeric gp160 precursor, which is further cleaved into two subunits linked by non-covalent bonds: the exterior gp120 and the transmembrane gp41 subunits ([Earl et al., 1990](#); [Freed et al., 1989](#); [McCune et al., 1988](#)). During the entry process, the gp120 subunit sequentially interacts with the CD4 surface molecule as well as one of its co-receptors (CCR5 or CXCR4) ([Kwong et al., 1998](#); [Shaik et al., 2019](#); [Wu et al., 2010a](#)), allowing the gp41 subunit to mediate fusion between the viral and target cell lipid membranes ([Chan et al., 1997](#); [Weissenhorn et al., 1997](#)). Since Env is the sole viral antigen exposed at the surface of virions and infected cells, it represents the main target for humoral responses. Fusion-competent Env trimers can sample different conformations. Broadly neutralizing antibodies (bNAbs) mainly recognize the pre-fusion "closed" conformation ([Li et al., 2020](#); [Lu et al., 2019](#); [Munro et al., 2014](#); [Stadtmueller et al., 2018](#)), while non-neutralizing antibodies (nnAbs) mainly bind to "open" CD4-bound conformations ([Alsahafi et al., 2019](#); [Jette et al., 2021](#); [Munro et al., 2014](#); [Yang et al., 2019](#)). Primary difficult-to-neutralize HIV-1 isolates favor the pre-fusion "closed" conformation, thus exposing Env regions that are heavily glycan shielded ([Doores, 2015](#); [Lee et al., 2016](#); [Li et al., 2020](#)).

Since antiretroviral therapy (ART) is unable to eradicate HIV-1 reservoirs, monotherapy or combination of bNAbs targeting the CD4-binding site (3BNC117, VRC01, VRC07-523), the V3 glycan supersite (10-1074, PGT121) and the V2 apex (PGDM1400) are currently under investigation in multiple clinical trials as therapeutic agents to reduce or eliminate cellular reservoirs through Fc-mediated effector functions (NCT02140255, NCT03837756, NCT04319367, NCT03721510). Thus far, results have shown that bNAbs can control HIV-1 viremia and delay viral rebound upon treatment interruption in HIV-1 infected individuals ([Bar et al., 2016](#); [Caskey et al., 2015](#); [Caskey et al., 2017](#); [Lynch et al., 2015](#); [Scheid et al., 2016](#)). Similar outcomes were also observed in non-human primates (NHP) and humanized mice ([Barouch et al., 2013](#); [Bolton et al., 2016](#); [Freund et al., 2017](#); [Halper-Stromberg et al., 2014](#); [Hessell et al., 2016](#);

[Horwitz et al., 2013](#); [Klein et al., 2012](#); [Nishimura et al., 2017](#); [Parsons et al., 2019](#); [Schommers et al., 2020](#); [Schoofs et al., 2019](#); [Shingai et al., 2013](#)). *In vivo* studies in animal models have demonstrated that Fc-mediated effector functions are required for the optimal therapeutic activity of bNAbs ([Asokan et al., 2020](#); [Bournazos et al., 2014](#); [Halper-Stromberg et al., 2014](#); [Lu et al., 2016](#); [Wang et al., 2020](#)). However, bNAbs rarely arise during natural infection and have yet to be consistently elicited by vaccination ([Landais and Moore, 2018](#); [Pauthner et al., 2019](#)).

Given the difficulty of eliciting bNAbs *in vivo*, nnAbs have been evaluated as a potential alternative. nnAbs represent the majority of antibodies in the plasma of HIV-1-infected individuals and are easily elicited by vaccination ([Beaudoin-Bussieres et al., 2020](#); [Davis et al., 2009](#); [Decker et al., 2005](#); [Madani et al., 2016](#); [Madani et al., 2018](#); [Tomaras and Haynes, 2009](#); [Tomaras et al., 2008](#); [Visciano et al., 2019](#)). Despite poor neutralization capacity, nnAbs can mediate other functions, such as the elimination of HIV-1-infected cells by antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) or antibody-dependent cellular phagocytosis (ADCP). Among these functions, ADCC was associated with the protection observed in the RV144 vaccine trial ([Haynes et al., 2012a](#); [Rerks-Ngarm et al., 2009](#)). Thus, several studies have examined the antiviral effects of nnAbs in non-human primates and humanized mice. These included prophylactic administration of nnAbs targeting the CD4-binding site (b6), the V3 loop (KD-247, 2219), the V1V2 region (830A, 2158), the gp120 cluster A (A32) and the gp41 immunodominant region (246D, 4B3, F240, 7B2). The results from these studies showed a reduction in the number of transmitted/founder (T/F) viruses and/or plasma viral loads after challenge with lab-adapted tier 1 viruses ([Burton et al., 2011](#); [Eda et al., 2006](#); [Hessell et al., 2018](#); [Hioe et al., 2022](#); [Moog et al., 2014](#); [Santra et al., 2015](#)). Finally, therapeutic administration of large quantities of the monoclonal anti-gp41 246D nnAb to humanized mice infected with a *vpu*-deleted tier 2 HIV-1 molecular clone (HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2) led to the elimination of infected cells and selected for escape mutations that stabilized Env “closed” conformation in an Fc-dependent manner, suggesting a protective effect ([Horwitz et al., 2017](#)). However, other studies administering a cocktail of nnAbs (A32 and 17b) to humanized mice infected with a wild-type tier 2 HIV-1 strain (JR-CSF) had no impact on viral replication, except when combined with a small CD4 mimetic compound (CD4mc) that “open-up” the trimer and expose these otherwise occluded epitopes ([Rajashakar et al., 2021](#)).



Differences between the various nnAb studies could be attributed to the specificity of the antibodies (anti-gp41 vs anti-gp120), the humanized mouse model used or specific viral determinants. In particular, certain studies were conducted using an infectious molecular clone (IMC) of HIV-1 that expressed a tier 2 Env (YU2) lacked a functional Vpu (HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2). However, Vpu plays an important role in downregulating cell surface CD4, which can bind and trigger conformational changes in the viral Env, therefore exposing vulnerable epitopes ([Prevost et al., 2022](#); [Veillette et al., 2015](#); [Veillette et al., 2014](#)). We thus asked whether the lack of a functional Vpu was responsible for the observed nnAbs activity by comparing isogenic viruses that differed solely in Vpu expression. Importantly, we tested the influence of Vpu expression on nnAb function not only *in vitro* but also in humanized mice. We found that anti-gp41 246D nnAb mediates potent ADCC responses against HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2, but not its Vpu<sup>+</sup> counterpart. Accordingly, 246D was found to alter viral replication *in vivo* only in absence of Vpu. These data thus provide conclusive evidence that Vpu allows HIV-1 to evade humoral responses *in vivo* and emphasizes the need to use fully functional IMCs to assess nnAb Fc-mediated effector functions.

### 5.3.4 RESULTS

#### Elicitation of anti-gp41 non-neutralizing antibodies following HIV-1-infection.

First, we characterized the susceptibility of the HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 IMC to nnAbs-mediated Fc-effector responses to confirm previous observations ([Horwitz et al., 2017](#)). To do so, we used plasma samples from a cross-sectional cohort of 50 HIV-1-infected individuals (HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma) which were grouped according to the inferred time post-infection and ART treatment (**Table 5.2.S1**). The nnAbs present in the HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma from this cohort were previously shown to mediate potent ADCC responses against infected cells presenting Env in the “open” CD4-bound conformation ([Ding et al., 2016a](#); [Richard et al., 2015](#); [Veillette et al., 2015](#)). We infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells with the HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 IMC and evaluated the ability of HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma to recognize and eliminate infected cells. Consistent with its susceptibility to nnAbs, HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were efficiently recognized (**Figure 5.2.1A**) and susceptible to ADCC (**Figure 5.2.1B**) mediated by all the tested plasma samples, with a significant increase of activity starting six months post-infection. Similar levels of activity were also present in plasma from ART-treated individuals (**Figure 5.2.1A-B**).

Since the HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 IMC has been reported to be sensitive to anti-gp41 Fc-mediated antiviral activity *in vivo* ([Horwitz et al., 2017](#)), we evaluated the contribution of anti-gp41 nnAbs present in HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma to infected-cell recognition and ADCC activity by performing binding competition experiments (**Figure 5.2.1C-D**). We focused on two main classes of anti-gp41 nnAbs based on observations from previous studies showing potent ADCC responses ([Ding et al., 2016a](#); [Gohain et al., 2016](#); [Moog et al., 2014](#); [Santra et al., 2015](#); [Sojar et al., 2019](#); [von Bredow et al., 2016](#); [Williams et al., 2019](#); [Yang et al., 2018](#)): the anti-cluster II Abs targeting the heptad repeat region 2 (HR2) ([Frey et al., 2010](#)) and anti-cluster I Abs targeting the disulfide loop region (C-C loop) ([Gohain et al., 2016](#); [Santra et al., 2015](#)) (**Figure 5.2.S1A**). Anti-gp41 cluster II nnAbs, inferred from binding competition experiments using the prototypic anti-cluster II 2.2B nnAb, were elicited in the acute phase of the infection (within 90 days) (**Figure 5.2.1C**). Elicitation of anti-gp41 cluster I nnAbs appears to take more time as revealed in binding competition experiments using the prototypic F240 anti-cluster I nnAb. While some competition with F240 binding was observed within the first three months post-infection, it culminates in the chronic phase of the infection (more than 2 years) (**Figure 5.2.1D**). In agreement with previous studies showing potent ADCC activity by anti-cluster I gp41 monoclonal Abs ([Ding et al., 2016a](#); [Gohain et al., 2016](#); [Moog et al., 2014](#); [Santra et al., 2015](#); [von Bredow et al., 2016](#); [Williams et al., 2019](#)), we observed that blockade with anti-cluster I gp41 F240 Fab fragment significantly decreased plasma binding, FcγRIIIa engagement and ADCC responses against HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 infected cells (**Figure 5.2.1E-G**).

### **Vpu protects HIV-1-infected cells from recognition and Fc-effector functions mediated by anti-Env antibodies *in vitro* and *ex vivo*.**

Since the HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 does not express the accessory protein Vpu due to a mutation in the start codon of the *vpu* gene ([Horwitz et al., 2017](#)), we asked whether the efficient recognition and ADCC-mediated elimination of HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells by nnAbs was linked to the lack of Vpu expression by this IMC. We restored the *vpu* open reading frame (ORF, **Figure 5.2.2A**) and infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells using both Vpu-negative (Vpu-) and Vpu-positive (Vpu+) constructs. Using a recently developed FACS-based intracellular staining method ([Prevost et al., 2022](#)), we confirmed Vpu expression upon restoration of the *vpu* ORF (**Figure 5.2.2B**). We also confirmed by intracellular staining the equivalent expression of Nef in both IMCs

(**Figure 5.2.2B**). Vpu efficiently downregulated cell-surface CD4 and BST-2 (**Figure 5.2.2C**). We also measured cell surface expression of NTB-A and PVR, which were shown to modulate ADCC responses against HIV-1-infected cells ([Prevost et al., 2019](#)) and are downregulated by Vpu ([Matusali et al., 2012](#); [Shah et al., 2010](#)). As expected, Vpu expression significantly downregulated their expression from the surface of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from five different healthy individuals (**Figure 5.2.2D-E**).

We next evaluated the effect of Vpu on the recognition and elimination of infected cells by nnAbs. Consistent with the observed downmodulation of CD4 and BST-2, Vpu expression strongly reduced the recognition of infected cells by monoclonal antibodies (mAb) targeting the anti-gp41 cluster I (246D), the gp120 cluster A (A32) or by polyclonal HIV+ plasma (**Figure 5.2.3A**). We extended these results to a panel of 27 nnAbs and 10 HIV+ plasma which yielded the same results (**Figure 5.2.3B-C**). As a measure of this panel of nnAbs to mediate Fc-effector functions, we examined their ability to interact with a soluble dimeric FcγRIIIa protein. This recombinant protein is used as a surrogate of FcγR clustering which is required to trigger Fc-effector functions ([Anand et al., 2019](#); [Wines et al., 2017](#); [Wines et al., 2016](#)). Consistent with a significant reduction in the recognition of infected cells by nnAbs, we observed that Vpu expression diminished the ability of all mAbs and HIV+ plasma to engage with FcγRIIIa (**Figure 5.2.3D-E**) and to mediate ADCC (**Figure 5.2.3F-G**). We noted that nnAbs targeting the gp41 were more potent at engaging soluble dimeric FcγRIIIa and mediating ADCC against cells infected with the vpu-defective IMC than the panel of anti-gp120 nnAbs tested (**Figure 5.2.S2A-C**).

Vpu facilitates viral release by downregulating the restriction factor BST-2 ([Neil et al., 2008](#); [Van Damme et al., 2008](#)). Multiple studies have shown that this activity decreases the overall amount of Env at the cell surface, consequently decreasing the susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC ([Alvarez et al., 2014](#); [Arias et al., 2014](#); [Pham et al., 2016](#); [Richard et al., 2017](#); [Veillette et al., 2014](#)). Since the *vpu*-defective HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 was used to evaluate the *in vivo* activity of several bNAbs ([Bournazos et al., 2016](#); [Bournazos et al., 2014](#); [Diskin et al., 2013](#); [Freund et al., 2015](#); [Freund et al., 2017](#); [Halper-Stromberg et al., 2014](#); [Horwitz et al., 2013](#); [Klein et al., 2012](#); [Klein et al., 2014](#); [Lu et al., 2016](#); [Schommers et al., 2020](#); [Schoofs et al., 2019](#); [Vanshylla et al., 2021](#)), we tested whether their binding to infected cells was also influenced by Vpu expression.

Consistent with decreased Env expression on cells infected with a Vpu<sup>+</sup> virus, we observed a significant reduction in CD4-binding site (3BNC117), V3 glycan (10-1074) and V2-apex (PG16) bNAb binding (**Figure 5.2.4A**). The phenotype was validated using a panel of 35 bNAbs targeting different epitopes, indicative of an overall reduction of cell-surface Env expression in the presence of a functional Vpu (**Figure 5.2.4B-C**). Accordingly, infected cells were significantly less susceptible to bNAbs-mediated Fc-effector functions (**Figure 5.2.4D-G**). Among the different classes of bNAbs, antibodies targeting the V3 glycan supersite, the CD4-binding site and the V2 apex demonstrated stronger ADCC-mediated killing of cells infected with the *vpu*-defective HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2, compared with antibodies known to interact with the gp120 silent face, the gp120-gp41 interface or the gp41 membrane-proximal external region (MPER), despite similar levels of Env recognition (**Figure 5.2.S2D-F**). These findings support previous observations indicating that in addition to Env recognition, the angle of approach of the antibody is important to mediate ADCC as it modulates the exposure of the Fc region required to activate effector cells ([Acharya et al., 2014](#); [Tolbert et al., 2020](#)).

Since all coding regions of the HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 IMC other than the env gene are derived from a lab-adapted proviral backbone, we wished to test unmodified HIV-1 primary isolates. Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with a panel of 13 infectious molecular clones coding for Vpu or not. This panel includes transmitted/founder (T/F) viruses, molecular clones derived during chronic infection, and IMCs from lab-adapted strains as controls (**Figure 5.2.5A-B**). Vpu expression consistently reduced nnAbs (246D and M785U3) and bNAbs (3BNC117 and 10-1074) recognition of infected cells, which in turn protected infected cells from ADCC responses mediated by all antibodies tested (**Figure 5.2.5A-B**). Env polymorphisms present in CH167 (E460), REJO (N334) and CH293 (T332, N334) viruses abrogated the capacity of bNAbs 3BNC117 or 10-1074 to recognize infected cells. Of note, while Vpu expression has a profound effect in the recognition of infected cells by all tested anti-Env antibodies, it did not affect their neutralization profile (**Figure 5.2.S1B-C**).

To extend our observations to a more physiological model, we expanded patient-derived infected CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells. Briefly, we isolated and activated primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from five ART-treated HIV-1-infected individuals. Viral replication upon reactivation was monitored by

intracellular p24 staining and flow cytometry (**Figure 5.2.5C**). These endogenously-infected cells were protected from Fc-mediated effector functions mediated by nnAb 246D but remained susceptible to bNAb PGT121 (**Figure 5.2.5C**), in agreement with our *in vitro* results generated using a Vpu+ IMC (**Figure 5.2.5A-B**).

### **Vpu expression limits the antiviral activity of the 246D antibody in HIV-1-infected humanized mice.**

To determine the impact of Vpu expression on 246D antiviral activities *in vivo*, we infected SRG-15 (SIRPA<sup>h/m</sup> Rag2<sup>-/-</sup> Il2rg<sup>-/-</sup> IL15<sup>h/m</sup>) humanized mice (hu-mice) with HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 or its *vpu*-competent counterpart. Similar to a previously used humanized mouse model ([Horwitz et al., 2017](#)), this hu-mice model supports HIV-1 replication and Fc-effector functions *in vivo* ([Herndler-Brandstetter et al., 2017](#); [Rajashekar et al., 2021](#)). Immunodeficient mice engrafted with human peripheral blood lymphocytes (hu-PBL) were infected intraperitoneally (I.P.) with 30,000 plaque-forming units (PFU) of either virus (**Figure 5.2.6A**). Half of each cohort received subcutaneous (S.C.) injections of the 246D nnAb at days 2, 4 and 6 post-infection. Infected humanized mice were then monitored for plasma viral loads (PVLs). Both viruses replicated efficiently in SRG-15 hu-PBL mice, reaching on average  $1 \times 10^7$  viral RNA copies/mL of plasma at 3 days post-infection (P.I.) (**Figure 5.2.6B**). While PVLs in mice infected with HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 stabilized after day 3, infection with the Vpu+ variant further increased PVLs to  $3.5 \times 10^7$  copies/mL by day 10. A single administration of the 246D nnAb at day 2 resulted in a significant reduction in PVLs (~36-fold decrease) in hu-mice infected with the *vpu*-defective virus but not significantly in those infected with the *vpu*-competent virus (**Figure 5.2.6B**). 246D maximal inhibitory effect (~85-fold reduction) was reached 10 days post-infection with the *vpu*-defective virus. At the end of the experiment (day 11), 246D treatment induced on average a 41-fold decrease in PVLs in mice infected with the *vpu*-defective virus but no difference in hu-mice infected with the Vpu+ virus. These results highlight the role played by Vpu in promoting viral replication in presence of nnAbs.

### **Harnessing non-neutralizing antibody Fc-effector functions by improving epitope exposure and FcγRIIIa interaction.**

Enhancing the affinity of the Fc fragment of antibodies for FcγRs was shown to increase Fc-effector functions of bNAbs in HIV-1-infected humanized mice ([Bournazos et al., 2014](#); [Wang](#)

[et al., 2020](#)). To evaluate if this strategy could apply to nnAbs, we introduced well-characterized IgG1 Fc mutations in the 246D heavy chain to modulate its interaction with FcγRs. The GRLR mutations (G236R/L328R) and the GASDALIE mutations (G236A/S239D/A330L/I332E) are respectively known to decrease and increase the affinity for activating FcγRs ([Bournazos et al., 2014](#); [Horton et al., 2010](#); [Smith et al., 2012](#)). To characterize these Fc variants, primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with the HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 constructs expressing Vpu or not. As expected, Fc modifications did not alter the ability of 246D to recognize infected cells, but it modulated the interaction with the soluble dimeric FcγR probe, with the GRLR mutations abrogating FcγRIIIa binding and the GASDALIE mutations improving it (**Figure 5.2.7A-B**). Introduction of the GASDALIE mutations enhanced ADCC against cells infected with the *vpu*-defective virus. Interestingly, it also allowed 246D to mediate ADCC against cells infected with the Vpu<sup>+</sup> IMC, while the unaltered native 246D failed to do so (**Figure 5.2.7C**). To evaluate if the 246D GASDALIE was able to mediate ADCC against cells infected with a primary isolate, we infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells with the transmitted/founder virus CH058, a strain shown to be resistant to 246D-mediated ADCC responses (**Figure 5.2.5B**). CH058-infected cells were poorly recognized by 246D and resistant to ADCC mediated by all 246D Fc variants tested, including 246D GASDALIE (**Figure 5.2.S4**). Consistent with the role of Nef and Vpu in preventing the exposure of epitopes recognized by nnAbs, disruption of the expression of both accessory proteins enhanced recognition and ADCC susceptibility of infected cells by 246D (**Figure 5.2.S4**). These results agree with the requirement of Env-CD4 interaction to expose the gp41 cluster I region. 246D recognizes with picomolar affinity a highly conserved linear peptide (<sup>596</sup>WGCSGKLICTT<sup>606</sup>) which corresponds to the gp41 C-C loop, located between HR1 and HR2 helices (**Figure 5.2.S3A-C**). This epitope is occluded in the “closed” Env trimer structure but can be exposed upon CD4-triggered conformational changes (**Figure 5.2.S3D-E**).

While it is becoming increasingly clear that HIV-1 successfully evades nnAbs responses by keeping its Env in a “closed” conformation ([Bruel et al., 2017](#); [Dufloo et al., 2020](#); [Veillette et al., 2015](#); [Veillette et al., 2014](#); [von Bredow et al., 2016](#)), new strategies are currently being tested to harness their potential antiviral activity. Small CD4 mimetic compounds have been optimized to “open up” Env trimers, therefore exposing otherwise occluded epitopes recognized by nnAbs ([Ding et al., 2019b](#); [Fritschi et al., 2021](#); [Jette et al., 2021](#); [Laumaea et al., 2020](#); [Melillo et al.,](#)

2016). Using this strategy, CD4mc were shown to synergize with monoclonal CD4i Abs or nnAbs found in plasma from infected individuals to eliminate HIV-1-infected cells *in vitro*, *ex vivo* and *in vivo* in humanized mice ([Alsaifi et al., 2019](#); [Anand et al., 2019](#); [Ding et al., 2016b](#); [Lee et al., 2015](#); [Madani et al., 2018](#); [Prevost et al., 2020b](#); [Rajashekar et al., 2021](#); [Richard et al., 2016](#); [Richard et al., 2017](#); [Richard et al., 2015](#)). Since 246D was unable to efficiently recognize cells infected with a Vpu<sup>+</sup> virus, we combined it with the CD4mc BNM-III-170, which greatly improved its capacity to bind to cells infected with HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 Vpu<sup>+</sup> or the primary isolate CH058 (**Figure 5.2.7A and 5.2.S4A**). Accordingly, FcγRIIIa engagement and ADCC responses against WT-infected cells were significantly enhanced upon CD4mc addition (**Figure 5.2.7B-C and 5.2.S4B-C**). Given these observations, we investigated whether CD4mc and Fc modifications could improve the ability of 246D to alter HIV-1 WT replication *in vivo*. To do so, NSG-15 humanized mice engrafted with hu-PBL were infected with HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 Vpu<sup>+</sup> and were administered with 246D nnAb alongside or without CD4mc BNM-III-170 at day 3, 5 and 7 post-infection (**Figure 5.2.7D**). In line with the data obtained *in vitro* (**Figure 5.2.7A-C**), we observed that co-administration of BNM-III-170 with 246D WT or GASDALIE considerably reduced PVLs at day 7 (18-fold and 219-fold, respectively), as compared to the antibody alone (**Figure 5.2.7E-F**). In both cases, treatment interruption led to a significant increase of PVLs in the following days. To evaluate the contribution of Fc-effector functions to this phenotype, infected humanized mice were co-administered with BNM-III-170 and 246D Fc variants (WT, GRLR or GASDALIE). At day 7 post-infection, PVLs were 15-fold higher in presence of 246D GRLR and 6-fold lower in presence of 246D GASDALIE, as compared to 246D WT, confirming the primordial role of Fc-effector functions in limiting HIV-1 replication in presence of nnAbs and CD4mc (**Figure 5.2.7G**). Altogether, our results indicate that Fc-effector functions mediated by nnAbs *in vivo* are limited by the occluded nature of their epitopes.

### 5.3.5 DISCUSSION

The HIV-1 accessory protein Vpu is a multi-functional protein that promotes viral replication by interfering with the intracellular trafficking of various host proteins (Dube et al., 2010). CD4 and BST-2 downregulation by Vpu was shown to increase viral release in cell culture systems ([Bour et al., 1999](#); [Neil et al., 2008](#); [Van Damme et al., 2008](#)). Humanized mouse models of acute HIV-1 infection using HIV-1-infected humanized mice confirmed the role of Vpu in

promoting viral replication in the initial phase of infection ([Dave et al., 2013](#); [Sato et al., 2012](#); [Yamada et al., 2018](#)). Similarly, chronic infection of NHPs with SHIV constructs encoding a defective or mutated vpu gene were found to be less pathogenic and exhibit lower viral loads ([Hout et al., 2005](#); [Shingai et al., 2011](#)). In these *in vivo* studies, elevated viral loads were linked to Vpu-mediated CD4 and BST-2 downregulation, but the potential contribution of nnAbs to PVLs were not addressed. Beyond its effect on viral release, Vpu protects HIV-1-infected cells from nnAbs-mediated ADCC responses by limiting the presence of Env-CD4 complexes at the plasma membrane ([Prevost et al., 2022](#); [Veillette et al., 2015](#); [Veillette et al., 2014](#)). Here, we show that Vpu expression enhances HIV-1 viral replication *in vivo* by limiting nnAbs recognition of infected cells and therefore their capacity to mediate Fc-effector functions. Beyond infected cell elimination, the absence of Vpu could also affect the level of circulating infectious viral particles. While we did not observe any changes in the neutralization by anti-gp41 nnAbs against virions produced in 293T cells *in vitro* (**Figure 5.2.S1B-C**), one could speculate that the capacity of nnAbs to neutralize viral particles originating from primary cells could also be altered in the absence of Vpu. Indeed, CD4 incorporation into virions has been shown to sensitize them to neutralization by various CD4i mAbs and HIV-IG ([Ding et al., 2019a](#)). While this was observed with nef-defective viruses, CD4 incorporation is also modulated by Vpu expression and this could apply to vpu-defective viruses ([Levesque et al., 2003](#)). Our results highlight the importance of carefully selecting viruses for *in vitro* and *in vivo* studies, since several widely used HIV-1 strains are defective for Vpu expression (e.g. HXB2, YU2, ADA) ([Li et al., 1991](#); [Shaw et al., 1984](#); [Theodore et al., 1996](#)).

Different approaches aimed at generating bNAbs by vaccination are being investigated using germline-targeting Env immunogens ([Dosenovic et al., 2015](#); [Jardine et al., 2016](#); [Steichen et al., 2016](#)) followed by sequential Env trimer immunization ([Escolano et al., 2016](#); [Haynes et al., 2012b](#); [Saunders et al., 2019](#); [Williams et al., 2017](#)) to guide antibody maturation. However, none of these vaccine studies have yet resulted in the consistent elicitation of bNAbs. Facing the difficulty in eliciting bNAbs by vaccination, nnAbs have been studied as an alternative for vaccine development. If ADCC activity contributes to vaccine protection, as suggested in the RV144 trial ([Haynes et al., 2012a](#)), our results suggest that elicitation of nnAbs are unlikely to confer protection in vaccine settings unless strategies to “open” the Env trimer are in place. Supporting this, NHP



immunized with monomeric gp120 were completely protected from a heterologous SHIV infection if a CD4mc was combined with the challenge viral stock ([Madani et al., 2018](#)). This study showed that nnAbs elicited by the gp120 immunogen did not protect in the absence of CD4mc. In addition, it was suggested that the modest protection observed in the RV144 trial could be linked to the circulating strains in Thailand (clade CRF01\_AE) which harbors Env in a more “open” conformation, while a similar vaccine trial (HVTN 702) was unsuccessful when performed in South Africa, where Env from the circulating strains (clade C) samples a more “closed” conformation ([Gray et al., 2021](#); [Prevost et al., 2017](#)).

In this study, we selected the SRG-15 and NSG-15 humanized mouse models over other humanized mouse models because of their endogenous expression of human IL-15, which allows the development of a functional NK cell compartment ([Brehm et al., 2018](#); [Herndler-Brandstetter et al., 2017](#)). NK cells play a central role in the ADCC responses *in vitro* and *in vivo*, and their specific depletion has been shown to abrogate the elimination of HIV-1 reservoirs by a combination of CD4mc and nnAbs in SRG-15 humanized mice ([Rajashekar et al., 2021](#)). Human IL-15 expression likely also increases HIV-1 replication by regulating the susceptibility of CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells to infection ([Manganaro et al., 2018](#)). This could explain the higher viral load peak ( $\sim 10^7$  copies/mL) (**Figure 5.2.6B**) compared to those achieved in the NRG humanized mice using the same HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub> YU2 IMC ( $\sim 10^5$  copies/mL) in previous studies ([Halper-Stromberg et al., 2014](#); [Horwitz et al., 2017](#)). We also used humanized mice as a model of HIV-1 infection since it allows the use of clinically-relevant HIV-1 isolates and does not require Env adaptation to replicate.

In addition to accessory proteins, Env conformation is a critical factor when studying nnAbs Fc-effector functions ([Alshafi et al., 2016](#); [Ding et al., 2016a](#); [Dufloo et al., 2020](#); [Prevost et al., 2021](#); [Prevost et al., 2018a](#); [Prevost et al., 2018b](#); [Prevost et al., 2017](#); [Richard et al., 2015](#); [Veillette et al., 2015](#); [Veillette et al., 2014](#)). Multiple studies reported significant effects of nnAbs in limiting HIV-1/SHIV replication *in vivo* using viruses coding for easy-to-neutralize tier 1 Env from lab-adapted strains, which are readily recognized by nnAbs ([Burton et al., 2011](#); [Eda et al., 2006](#); [Hessell et al., 2018](#); [Hioe et al., 2022](#); [Moog et al., 2014](#); [Santra et al., 2015](#)). A recent study showed that tier 2 primary virus can be impacted *in vivo* by nnAbs but only when combined with CD4mc ([Rajashekar et al., 2021](#)). The combination of nnAbs or HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma with CD4mc

significantly reduced plasma viral loads and the size of the viral reservoir in an Fc-effector functions and NK cells dependent manner ([Rajashekar et al., 2021](#)). These results emphasize the need to utilize fully functional viruses in ADCC assays to preclude Vpu-related artifacts. However, one could speculate that the development of broad-spectrum Vpu inhibitors may enhance the efficacy of nnAbs to eliminate HIV-1-infected cells ([Robinson et al., 2022](#)). Overall, our study indicates that it is unlikely for nnAbs-based immunotherapies to alter HIV-1 viral replication *in vivo* in the absence of strategies aimed at exposing the vulnerable epitopes they recognize.

### **5.3.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The humanized mice experiments were performed with only one nnAb (246D) and using a chimeric virus (HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2). Further *in vivo* experiments with additional nnAbs of different epitope specificities and using clinically relevant HIV-1 primary isolates are needed to confirm our observations. Moreover, our study mainly focuses on the role of the accessory protein Vpu to evade humoral responses *in vivo* but Nef is also known to affect Env conformation at the surface of HIV-1-infected cells. Nef plays a major role in CD4 downregulation from the cell surface and we cannot rule out the possibility that Nef could also contribute to HIV-1 evasion of nnAbs responses *in vivo*, especially when using primary viruses.

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### 5.3.8 STAR METHODS

**Table 5.2.1 - Key resources table**

REAGENT or RESOURCE	SOURCE	IDENTIFIER
<b>Antibodies</b>		
Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 246D	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Xu et al., 1991)	Cat# 1245
Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 246D GRLR	This paper	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 246D GASDALIE	This paper	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 F240	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Cavacini et al., 1998)	Cat# 7623
Anti-Env gp41 F240 Fab fragment	(Gohain et al., 2016)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 240D	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Xu et al., 1991)	Cat# 1242
Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 167D	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Xu et al., 1991)	Cat# 11681
Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 50-69	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Gorny et al., 1989)	Cat# 531
Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 QA255-006, QA255-067 and QA255-072	Dr Julie Overbaugh (Williams et al., 2019)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 7B2	NIH AIDS Reagent Program	Cat# 12556
Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 2.2B, 12.3D and 12.4H	Dr James E. Robinson	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 M785U1, M785U2, M785U3, M785U4, N10U1, N10U2, N5U1, N5U2 and N5U3	Dr George Lewis (Ding et al., 2016a)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env cluster A A32	NIH AIDS Reagent Program	Cat# 11438
Monoclonal anti-Env cluster A N5i5	(Guan et al., 2013)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env cluster A C11	Dr James E. Robinson (Robinson JE, 1992)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env co-receptor binding site 17b	NIH AIDS Reagent Program	Cat# 4091
Monoclonal anti-Env co-receptor binding site X5	(Huang et al., 2004)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env V3 loop GE2-JG8	Dr Gunilla Karlsson Hedestam (Phad et al., 2015)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env CD4 binding site 3BNC117	(Scheid et al., 2011)	RRID:AB_2491033
Monoclonal anti-Env CD4 binding site N49-P7	(Sajadi et al., 2018)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env CD4 binding site VRC01	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Wu et al., 2010b)	Cat# 12033; RRID:AB_2491019

Monoclonal anti-Env CD4 binding site VRC03	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Wu et al., 2010b)	Cat# 12032; RRID:AB_2491021
Monoclonal anti-Env CD4 binding site VRC07-523	Dr John Mascola (Rudicell et al., 2014)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env CD4 binding site VRC13 and VRC16	Dr John Mascola (Zhou et al., 2015)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env CD4 binding site N6	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Huang et al., 2016)	Cat# 12968
Monoclonal anti-Env CD4 binding site NC-Cow1	(Sok et al., 2017)	RRID:AB_2687423
Monoclonal anti-Env CD4 binding site b12	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Burton et al., 1994)	Cat# 2640; RRID:AB_2491069
Monoclonal anti-Env CD4 binding site 1-18	Dr Florian Klein (Schommers et al., 2020)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env CD4 binding site HJ16	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Corti et al., 2010)	Cat# 12138; RRID:AB_2491032
Monoclonal anti-Env CD4 binding site CH106	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Liao et al., 2013)	Cat# 12566
Monoclonal anti-Env V3 glycan PGT121, PGT122, PGT123, PGT125, PGT126, PGT128, PGT130, PGT135 and PGT136	International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (Walker et al., 2011)	RRID:AB_2491041 RRID:AB_2491042 RRID:AB_2491043 RRID:AB_2491044 RRID:AB_2491045 RRID:AB_2491047 RRID:AB_2491048 RRID:AB_2491050 RRID:AB_2491060
Monoclonal anti-Env V3 glycan BG18	(Freund et al., 2017)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env V3 glycan 10-1074	(Mouquet et al., 2012)	RRID:AB_2491062
Anti-Env V2 apex PGT145 monoclonal Ab	International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (Walker et al., 2011)	RRID:AB_2491054
Anti-Env V2 apex PG9 and PG16 monoclonal Ab	International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (Walker et al., 2009)	RRID:AB_2491030 RRID:AB_2491031
Anti-Env silent face SF12 monoclonal Ab	(Schoofs et al., 2019)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env gp120-gp41 interface PGT151	International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (Falkowska et al., 2014)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env gp120-gp41 interface 8ANC195	(Scheid et al., 2011)	RRID:AB_2491037
Monoclonal anti-Env gp120-gp41 interface 35O22	Dr Mark Connors (Huang et al., 2014)	N/A
Monoclonal anti-Env gp120-gp41 interface VRC34	Dr John Mascola (Kong et al., 2016)	RRID:AB_2819225

Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 MPER 10E8	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Huang et al., 2012)	Cat# 12294; RRID:AB_2491067
Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 MPER 4E10	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Stiegler et al., 2001)	Cat# 10091; RRID:AB_2491029
Monoclonal anti-Env gp41 MPER 2F5	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Buchacher et al., 1994)	Cat# 1475; RRID:AB_2491015
Polyclonal Anti-HIV Immune Globulin, Pooled Inactivated Human Sera (HIV-IG)	NIH AIDS Reagent Program	Cat# 3957; RRID:AB_2890264
Mouse anti-Human CD4 clone OKT4	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# 14-0048-82; RRID:AB_467075
PE-Cy7 Mouse anti-Human CD317 (BST-2) clone RS38E	Biolegend	Cat# 348416; RRID:AB_2716221
Mouse anti-human CD155 (PVR) clone SKII.4	Biolegend	Cat# 337602; RRID:AB_2300508
Mouse anti-human CD352 (NTB-A) clone NT-7	Biolegend	Cat# 317202; RRID:AB_571931
Rabbit Anti-HIV-1 Nef Polyclonal Antibody	NIH AIDS Reagent Program	Cat# 2949
Rabbit Anti-HIV-1 Vpu Polyclonal Antibody	(Prevost et al., 2020a)	N/A
Goat anti-Human IgG (H+L) Cross-Adsorbed Secondary Antibody, Alexa Fluor 647	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# A21445; RRID:AB_2535862
Goat anti-Mouse IgG (H+L) Cross-Adsorbed Secondary Antibody, Alexa Fluor 647	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# A21235; RRID:AB_2535804
Alexa Fluor 647 anti-Human IgG Fc Antibody	Biolegend	Cat# 409319; RRID:AB_2563329
Brilliant Violet 421 Donkey anti-Rabbit IgG (minimal x-reactivity) Antibody	Biolegend	Cat# Poly4064; RRID:AB_10643424
Goat anti-Human IgG Fc Cross-Adsorbed Secondary Antibody, HRP	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# A18823; RRID:AB_2535600
Streptavidin, Alexa Fluor 647 conjugate	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# S32357; RRID:AB_2336066
PE Mouse anti-HIV-1 p24 clone KC57	Beckman Coulter	Cat# 6604667; RRID:AB_1575989
APC Mouse Anti-Human CD45 Clone HI30	BD Biosciences	Cat# 561864; RRID:AB_11153499
FITC Mouse Anti-Human CD3 Clone HIT3a	BD Biosciences	Cat# 555339; RRID:AB_395745
PE Mouse Anti-Human CD8 Clone RPA-T8	Biolegend	Cat# 555367; RRID:AB_395770
PerCP Mouse Anti-human CD4 Clone RPA-T4	Biolegend	Cat# 300527; RRID:AB_893327
<b>Biological samples</b>		
Human PBMCs from HIV-1-infected and uninfected individuals	FRQS AIDS network and New York Blood Bank	N/A
Plasma from HIV-1-infected individuals	FRQS AIDS network	N/A
<b>Chemicals, peptides, and recombinant proteins</b>		
Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium (DMEM)	Wisent	Cat# 319-005-CL

Gibco™ Roswell Park Memorial Institute 1640 medium (RPMI)	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# 11875-093
Fetal bovine serum (FBS)	VWR	Cat# 97068-085
Penicillin/streptomycin	Wisent	Cat# 450-200-EL
Tris-buffered saline (TBS)	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# BP24711
Bovine Serum Albumin (BSA)	BioShop	Cat# ALB001.100
Tween20	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# BP337-500
Western Lightning Plus-ECL, Enhanced Chemiluminescence Substrate	Perkin Elmer Life Sciences	Cat# NEL105001EA
Phosphate buffered saline (PBS)	Wisent	Cat# 311-010-CL
Lymphocyte separation medium	Wisent	Cat# 305-010-CL
FreeStyle 293F expression medium	ThermoFisher Scientific	Cat# 12338002
ExpiFectamine 293 transfection reagent	ThermoFisher Scientific	Cat# A14525
Passive lysis buffer	Promega	Cat# E1941
Firefly D-Luciferin Free Acid	Prolume	Cat# 306
eBioscience™ Cell proliferation dye eFluor670	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# 65-0840-90
eBioscience™ Cell proliferation dye eFluor450	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# 65-0842-85
LIVE/DEAD Fixable Aqua Dead Cell Stain	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# L34966
Formaldehyde 37%	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# F79-500
Biotinylated recombinant soluble dimeric FcγRIIIa (V <sup>158</sup> ) protein	(Wines et al., 2016)	N/A
CD4 mimetic BNM-III-170	Dr Amos B. Smith III (Chen et al., 2019)	N/A
Dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO)	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# D1391
Phytohemagglutinin-L (PHA-L)	Sigma	Cat# L2769
Recombinant IL-2 (rIL-2)	NIH AIDS Reagent Program	Cat# 136
Protein A Sepharose CL-4B	Cytiva	Cat # 17096303
Papain-agarose resin	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat # 20341
β-mercaptoethanol	Bio-Rad	Cat# #1610710
Acrylamide/Bis-Acrylamide	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# BP1410-1
Sodium dodecyl sulfate (SDS)	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat # BP166-500
Ammonium Persulfate	Bio-Rad	Cat# 1610700
TEMED	Bio-Rad	Cat# 1610801
Coomassie Brilliant Blue R-250	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# BP101-50
Magnesium phosphate (MgSO <sub>4</sub> )	Bioshop	Cat# MAG511.500
Potassium phosphate monobasic (KH <sub>2</sub> PO <sub>4</sub> )	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# P285-500

Adenosine 5-triphosphate disodium salt hydrate (ATP)	Sigma	Cat# A3377-10G
Dithiothreitol (DTT)	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# BP172-5
HIV-1 Env gp41 peptide (583-618)	(Gohain et al.,2016)	N/A
HIV-1 Env gp41 peptide (587-597)	Genscript	N/A
HIV-1 Env gp41 peptide (596-606)	Genscript	N/A
SARS-CoV-2 Spike S2 peptide (1153-1163)	(Li et al., 2021)	N/A
<b>Critical commercial assays</b>		
QuikChange II XL Site-Directed Mutagenesis Kit	Agilent Technologies	Cat # #200522
Alexa Fluor 647 Protein Labeling Kit	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# A20173
EasySep human CD4+ T cell enrichment kit	StemCell Technologies	Cat# 19052
Cytofix/Cytoperm Fixation/ Permeabilization Kit	BD Biosciences	Cat# 554714
QIAamp viral RNA mini kit	QIAGEN	Cat# 52906
Quantitect SYBR green RT-PCR Master Mix	QIAGEN	Cat# 204245
<b>Experimental models: Cell lines</b>		
293T human embryonic kidney cells	ATCC	Cat# CRL-3216; RRID: CVCL_0063
TZM-bl cells	NIH AIDS Reagent Program	Cat# 8129; RRID:CVCL_B478
FreeStyle 293F cells	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# R79007; RRID: CVCL_D603
<b>Experimental models: Organisms/strains</b>		
SIRPA <sup>h/m</sup> Rag2 <sup>-/-</sup> Il2rg <sup>-/-</sup> IL15 <sup>h/m</sup> (SRG-15) mice	(Herndler-Brandstetter et al., 2017)	N/A
NOD.Cg-Prkdc <sup>scid</sup> Il2rg <sup>-/-</sup> Tg(Hu-IL15) (NSG-15) mice	Jackson Laboratory	Cat# 030890; RRID:IMSR_JAX:030890
<b>Oligonucleotides</b>		
246D heavy chain G236R FWD: 5'-CCTGAACTCCTGCGGGGACCGTCAGTC-3' REV: 5'-GACTGACGGTCCCCGCAGGAGTTCAGG-3'	Integrated DNA Technologies	N/A
246D heavy chain L328R FWD: 5'-CCAACAAAGCCCGCCCAGCCCCATC-3' REV: 5'-GATGGGGGCTGGGCGGGCTTTGTTGG-3'	Integrated DNA Technologies	N/A
246D heavy chain G236A/S239D FWD: 5'-CTCCTGGCGGGACCGGATGTCTTCCTCTTC-3' REV: 5'-GAAGAGGAAGACATCCGGTCCCGCCAGGAG-3'	Integrated DNA Technologies	N/A
246D heavy chain A330L/I332E FWD: 5'-GCCCTCCCCTCCCGAAGAGAAAACCATC-3' REV: 5'-GATGGTTTTCTCTTCGGGGAGTGGGAGGGC-3'	Integrated DNA Technologies	N/A
HIV-1 IMC JR-CSF Vpu- primers FWD:5'-GTGCATGTAATGTAACCTTTACAAATATTAGC-3' REV: 5'-GCTAATATTTGTAAAGGTTACATTACATGCAC-3'	Integrated DNA Technologies	N/A
HIV-1 <sub>NL4/3</sub> YU2 Vpu+ primers FWD: 5'-GTAAGTAGTACATGTAATGCAACCTATAACC-3' REV: 5'-GGTATAGGTTGCATTACATGTACTACTTAC-3'	Integrated DNA Technologies	N/A



HIV-1 <i>gag</i> primers FWD: 5'-TGCTATGTCAGTTCCCCTTGGTTCTCT-3' REV: 5'-AGTTGGAGGACATCAAGCAGCCATGCAAAT-3'	(Rajashekar et al., 2021)	N/A
<b>Recombinant DNA</b>		
246D mAb Light Chain Expression Vector	NIH AIDS Reagent Program	Cat# 13742
246D mAb Heavy Chain Expression Vector	NIH AIDS Reagent Program	Cat# 13741
246D GRLR mAb Heavy Chain Expression Vector	This paper	N/A
246D GASDALIE mAb Heavy Chain Expression Vector	This paper	N/A
HIV-1 <sub>NL4/3</sub> YU2	(Horwitz et al., 2017)	N/A
HIV-1 <sub>NL4/3</sub> YU2 Vpu+	This paper	N/A
HIV-1 IMC JR-CSF	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Koyanagi et al., 1987)	Cat# 2708
HIV-1 IMC JR-CSF Vpu-	This paper	N/A
HIV-1 IMC NL4/3	NIH AIDS Reagent Program (Adachi et al., 1986)	Cat# 114
HIV-1 IMC NL4/3 Vpu-	(Neil et al., 2006)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC YU2	(Li et al., 1991)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC YU2 Vpu+	(Krapp et al., 2016)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC AD8	(Theodore et al., 1996)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC AD8 Vpu+	(Krapp et al., 2016)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC CH058	(Ochsenbauer et al., 2012)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC CH058 Vpu-	(Kmieciak et al., 2016)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC CH058 Nef-	(Heigle et al., 2016)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC CH058 Nef- Vpu-	(Heigle et al., 2016)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC CH077	(Ochsenbauer et al., 2012)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC CH077 Vpu-	(Kmieciak et al., 2016)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC REJO	(Ochsenbauer et al., 2012)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC REJO Vpu-	(Yamada et al., 2018)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC STCO	(Parrish et al., 2013)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC STCO Vpu-	(Kmieciak et al., 2016)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC CH198	(Parrish et al., 2013)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC CH198 Vpu-	(Sauter et al., 2015)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC ZM246F	(Parrish et al., 2012)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC ZM246F Vpu-	(Langer et al., 2015)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC CH167	(Parrish et al., 2013)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC CH167 Vpu-	(Kmieciak et al., 2016)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC CH293	(Parrish et al., 2013)	N/A
HIV-1 IMC CH293 Vpu-	(Sauter et al., 2015)	N/A
VSV G glycoprotein expression vector	(Emi et al., 1991)	N/A

<b>Software and algorithms</b>		
BD FACSDiva v9.0	BD Biosciences	RRID: SCR_001456
FlowJo v10.5.3	Tree Star	<a href="https://www.flowjo.com/">https://www.flowjo.com/</a> ; RRID:SCR_008520
GraphPad Prism v9.1.0	GraphPad	<a href="https://www.graphpad.com/">https://www.graphpad.com/</a> ; RRID:SCR_002798
<b>Other</b>		
BD LSR II Flow Cytometer	BD Biosciences	N/A
TriStar LB 942 Microplate Reader	Berthold Technologies	N/A
Applied Biosystems 7500 real-time PCR system	Thermo Fisher Scientific	N/A
Biacore 3000	Cytiva	RRID: SCR_019954
Protein A sensor chip	Cytiva	Cat # 29127558
Superdex 200 16/60 column	Cytiva	Cat# 17-1069-01
Superdex 200 10/300 GL column	Cytiva	Cat# 17-5175-01
Clear V-bottom 96-well plates (cell culture-treated)	Corning	Cat# 0720096
White flat-bottom 96-well plates (cell culture-treated)	Corning	Cat# 0877126
White Maxisorp™ Nunc™ 96-well plates	Thermo Fisher Scientific	Cat# 437796

## **EXPERIMENTAL MODELS AND SUBJECT DETAILS**

### **Ethics Statement**

Written informed consent was obtained from all study participants and research adhered to the ethical guidelines of CRCHUM and was reviewed and approved by the CRCHUM institutional review board (ethics committee, approval number CE 16.164 - CA). Research adhered to the standards indicated by the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants were adult and provided informed written consent prior to enrolment in accordance with Institutional Review Board approval.

### **Cell lines and primary cells**

293T human embryonic kidney cells (obtained from ATCC) and TZM-bl cells (NIH AIDS Reagent Program) were maintained at 37°C under 5% CO<sub>2</sub> in Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium (DMEM) (Wisent, St. Bruno, QC, Canada), supplemented with 5 % fetal bovine serum (FBS) (VWR, Radnor, PA, USA) and 100 U/mL penicillin/streptomycin (Wisent). 293T cells were derived from 293 cells, into which the simian virus 40 T-antigen was inserted. TZM-bl cells were

derived from HeLa cells and were engineered to stably express high levels of human CD4 and CCR5 and to contain the firefly luciferase reporter gene under the control of the HIV-1 promoter ([Platt et al., 1998](#)). Human peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) from ten HIV-negative individuals (8 males and 2 females) and five antiretroviral therapy (ART)-treated HIV-positive individuals (all males) obtained by leukapheresis and Ficoll-Paque density gradient isolation were cryopreserved in liquid nitrogen until further use. CD4<sup>+</sup> T lymphocytes were purified from resting PBMCs by negative selection using immunomagnetic beads per the manufacturer's instructions (StemCell Technologies, Vancouver, BC) and were activated with phytohemagglutinin-L (10 µg/mL) for 48 h and then maintained in RPMI 1640 (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA) complete medium supplemented with rIL-2 (100 U/mL).

### **Human plasma samples**

The FRQS-AIDS and Infectious Diseases Network supports a representative cohort of newly-HIV-infected subjects with clinical indication of primary infection [the Montreal Primary HIV Infection Cohort ([Fontaine et al., 2011](#); [Fontaine et al., 2009](#))]. Cross-sectional plasma samples from 50 HIV-1-infected individuals were segregated in five groups based on infection duration and treatment with antiretroviral therapy (ART). Plasma samples were obtained from treatment-naïve subjects during the acute phase of infection (first 3 months after HIV acquisition), the early phase of infection (3–6 and 6-12 months after acquisition) and during the chronic phase of infection (>2 years after acquisition). Another group of chronically-infected individuals (>2 years after acquisition) received ART treatment. Plasma samples were also obtained from ten age- and sex-matched HIV-negative healthy volunteers.

### **Experimental animal models**

SRG-15 mice encoding human SIRPA and IL-15 in a 129xBALB/c (N3) genetic background were originally generated in the laboratory of Dr Richard Flavell (Yale University) ([Herndler-Brandstetter et al., 2017](#)). NSG-15 mice with expression of the human IL15 gene in the NOD/ShiLtJ background were purchased from the Jackson Laboratory (Bar Harbor, ME, USA) ([Brehm et al., 2018](#)). The mice were bred and maintained under specific pathogen-free conditions. All animal studies were performed with authorization from Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUC) of Yale University. The mice were a mix of male and female randomly

distributed between groups. SRG-15-Hu-PBL and NSG-15-Hu-PBL mice were engrafted as described ([Rajashekar et al., 2021](#)). Briefly,  $1 \times 10^7$  PBMCs, purified by Ficoll density gradient centrifugation of healthy donor blood buffy coats (two anonymous donors, obtained from the New York Blood Bank) were injected IP in a 200- $\mu$ L volume into 6- to 8-week-old SRG-15 or NSG-15 mice, using a 1-cm<sup>3</sup> syringe and 25-gauge needle. Cell engraftment was tested 15 days post-transplant. 100  $\mu$ L of blood was collected by retroorbital bleeding. PBMCs were isolated by Ficoll density gradient centrifugation; stained with fluorescently-labelled anti-human CD45, CD3, CD4, CD8 and CD56 antibodies and analyzed by flow cytometry to confirm engraftment. Humanized mice were intraperitoneally challenged with 30,000 PFU of HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 Vpu<sup>-</sup> or Vpu<sup>+</sup>. Infection profile was analyzed for plasma viral load (PVL) analysis of serially collected plasma samples.

## METHOD DETAILS

### Plasmids and proviral constructs

The HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 proviral construct has been previously reported ([Horwitz et al., 2017](#)). A mutation was introduced in the putative vpu start codon (ACG  $\rightarrow$  ATG) to restore the vpu open reading frame (ORF) in the HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 IMC using the QuikChange II XL site-directed mutagenesis protocol (Agilent Technologies, Santa Clara, CA). Transmitted/Founder (T/F) and chronic infectious molecular clones (IMCs) of patients CH058, CH077, CH198, ZM246F, CH167, CH293, REJO, STCO were inferred and constructed as previously described ([Ochsenbauer et al., 2012](#); [Parrish et al., 2013](#); [Parrish et al., 2012](#); [Salazar-Gonzalez et al., 2009](#)). The generation of vpu-defective IMCs was previously described ([Kmiec et al., 2016](#); [Langer et al., 2015](#); [Sauter et al., 2015](#); [Yamada et al., 2018](#)) and consists in the introduction of premature stop codons in the vpu reading frame using the QuikChange II XL site-directed mutagenesis protocol. CH058 IMCs defective for Vpu and/or Nef expression were previously described ([Heigele et al., 2016](#); [Kmiec et al., 2016](#)). The IMCs encoding for HIV-1 reference strains NL4/3, AD8, YU2 and JR-CSF were described elsewhere ([Adachi et al., 1986](#); [Koyanagi et al., 1987](#); [Krapp et al., 2016](#); [Li et al., 1991](#); [Theodore et al., 1996](#)). To generate vpu-defective JR-CSF IMC, a stop-codon was introduced directly after the start-codon of vpu using the QuikChange II XL site-directed mutagenesis protocol. The plasmids encoding for the heavy and light chains of the 246D antibody are available

through the NIH AIDS Reagent Program. Site-directed mutagenesis was performed on the plasmid expressing 246D antibody heavy chain to introduce the GRLR mutations (G236R/L328R) or the GASDALIE mutations (G236A/S239D/A330L/I332E) using the QuikChange II XL site-directed mutagenesis protocol. The presence of the desired mutations was determined by automated DNA sequencing. The vesicular stomatitis virus G (VSV-G)-encoding plasmid was previously described ([Emi et al., 1991](#)).

### **Viral production, infections and ex vivo amplification.**

For *in vitro* infection, vesicular stomatitis virus G (VSV-G)-pseudotyped HIV-1 viruses were produced by co-transfection of 293T cells with an HIV-1 proviral construct and a VSV-G-encoding vector using the calcium phosphate method. Two days post-transfection, cell supernatants were harvested, clarified by low-speed centrifugation ( $300 \times g$  for 5 min), and concentrated by ultracentrifugation at  $4^\circ\text{C}$  ( $100,605 \times g$  for 1 h) over a 20% sucrose cushion. Pellets were resuspended in fresh RPMI, and aliquots were stored at  $-80^\circ\text{C}$  until use. Viruses were then used to infect activated primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from healthy HIV-1 negative donors by spin infection at  $800 \times g$  for 1 h in 96-well plates at  $25^\circ\text{C}$ . Viral preparations were titrated directly on primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells to achieve similar levels of infection among the different IMCs tested (around 10% of p24<sup>+</sup> cells). To expand endogenously infected CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells obtained from ART-treated HIV-1-infected individuals were isolated from PBMCs by negative selection. Purified CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were activated with PHA-L at  $10 \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$  for 48 h and then cultured for at least 6 days in RPMI 1640 complete medium supplemented with rIL-2 ( $100 \text{ U}/\text{ml}$ ) to reach greater than 10% infection for the ADCC assay.

### **Antibodies**

The following Abs were used to assess cell-surface Env staining: anti-gp41 mAbs QA255-006, QA255-067, QA255-072 (kindly provided by Julie Overbaugh), 7B2, 2.2B, 12.3D, 12.4H (kindly provided by James Robinson), F240 (NIH AIDS Reagent Program), M785U1, M785U2, M785U3, M785U4, N10U1, N10U2, N5U1, N5U2, N5U3 (kindly provided by George Lewis), 246D, 240D, 167D, and 50-69; anti-cluster A A32 (NIH AIDS Reagent Program), C11 (kindly provided by James Robinson) and N5i5; anti-co-receptor binding site 17b (NIH AIDS Reagent Program) and X5; anti-V3 loop GE2-JG8 (kindly provided by Gunilla Karlsson Hedestam); anti-

CD4 binding site VRC01, VRC03, VRC07-523, VRC13, VRC16 (kindly provided by John Mascola), N6 (kindly provided by Mark Connors), 1-18 (kindly provided by Florian Klein), HJ16, CH106 (NIH AIDS Reagent Program), NC-Cow1, b12, 3BNC117 and N49-P7; anti-V3 glycan PGT121, PGT122, PGT123, PGT125, PGT126, PGT128, PGT130, PGT135, PGT136 (IAVI), BG18 and 10-1074; anti-V2 apex PGT145, PG9 and PG16 (IAVI); anti-gp120-gp41 interface PGT151 (IAVI), 35O22 (kindly provided by Mark Connors), VRC34 (kindly provided by John Mascola) and 8ANC195; anti-silent face SF12; anti-MPER 10E8 (kindly provided by Mark Connors), 4E10 and 2F5 (NIH AIDS Reagent Program). The HIV-IG polyclonal antibody consists of anti-HIV immunoglobulins purified from a pool of plasma from HIV<sup>+</sup> asymptomatic donors (NIH AIDS Reagent Program). Mouse anti-human CD4 (clone OKT4; Thermo Fisher Scientific), mouse anti-human BST-2 (clone RS38E, PE-Cy7-conjugated; Biolegend, San Diego, CA, USA), mouse anti-human NTB-A (clone NT-7, Biolegend) and mouse anti-PVR (clone SKI1.4, Biolegend) were also used as primary antibodies for cell-surface staining. Goat anti-mouse IgG (H+L), goat anti-human IgG (H+L) (Thermo Fisher Scientific) and mouse anti-human IgG Fc (Biolegend) antibodies pre-coupled to Alexa Fluor 647 were used as secondary antibodies in flow cytometry experiments. Rabbit antisera raised against Nef (NIH AIDS Reagent Program) or Vpu ([Prevost et al., 2020a](#)) were used as primary antibodies in intracellular staining. BrilliantViolet 421 (BV421)-conjugated donkey anti-rabbit antibodies (Biolegend) were used as secondary antibodies to detect Nef and Vpu antisera binding by flow cytometry. Goat anti-human IgG Fc antibodies conjugated to horseradish peroxidase (HRP; Thermo Fisher Scientific) were used as secondary antibodies in ELISA experiments.

### **Small CD4-mimetics**

The small-molecule CD4-mimetic compound (CD4mc) BNM-III-170 was synthesized as described previously ([Chen et al., 2019](#)). The compounds were dissolved in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) at a stock concentration of 10 mM and diluted to 50  $\mu$ M in phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) for cell-surface staining or in RPMI-1640 complete medium for ADCC assays.

### **Protein production of recombinant proteins**

FreeStyle 293F cells (Thermo Fisher Scientific) were grown in FreeStyle 293F medium (Thermo Fisher Scientific) to a density of  $1 \times 10^6$  cells/ml at 37 °C with 8 % CO<sub>2</sub> with regular

agitation (150 rpm). Cells were transfected with plasmids expressing the light and heavy chains of a given antibody using ExpiFectamine 293 transfection reagent, as directed by the manufacturer (Thermo Fisher Scientific). One week later, the cells were pelleted and discarded. The supernatants were filtered (0.22- $\mu$ m-pore-size filter), and antibodies were purified by protein A affinity columns, as directed by the manufacturer (Cytiva, Marlborough, MA, USA). The recombinant protein preparations were dialyzed against phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) and stored in aliquots at  $-80^{\circ}\text{C}$ . To assess purity, recombinant proteins were loaded on SDS-PAGE polyacrylamide gels in the presence or absence of  $\beta$ -mercaptoethanol and stained with Coomassie blue. Purified F240 and 2.2B IgG were conjugated with Alexa Fluor 647 dye according to the manufacturer's protocol (Thermo Fisher Scientific). The F240 Fab fragments were prepared from purified IgG (10 mg/mL) by proteolytic digestion with immobilized papain (Pierce, Rockford, IL) and purified using protein A, followed by gel filtration chromatography on a Superdex 200 16/60 column (Cytiva). The biotin-tagged dimeric recombinant soluble Fc $\gamma$ RIIIa (V158) protein was produced and characterized as described ([Wines et al., 2016](#)) with additional purification step using a Superdex 200 10/300 GL column (Cytiva).

### **Flow cytometry analysis of cell-surface staining**

Cell surface staining was performed at 48h post-infection. Mock-infected or HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were incubated for 30 min at  $37^{\circ}\text{C}$  with anti-CD4 (0.5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ), anti-BST-2 (2  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ), anti-NTB-A (5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ), anti-PVR (10  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ), anti-Env mAbs (5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ), HIV-IG (50  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ) or plasma (1:1000 dilution). Cells were then washed once with PBS and stained with the appropriate Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated secondary antibody (2  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ), when needed, for 20 min at room temperature. After one more PBS wash, cells were fixed in a 2% PBS-formaldehyde solution. Alternatively, the binding of anti-Env Abs was detected using a biotin-tagged dimeric recombinant soluble Fc $\gamma$ RIIIa (0.2  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ) followed by the addition of Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated streptavidin (Thermo Fisher Scientific; 2  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ). Anti-human IgG Fc secondary antibodies (3  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ) were used when cell surface binding was performed in presence of F240 Fab blockade. Infected cells were then permeabilized using the Cytofix/Cytoperm Fixation/Permeabilization Kit (BD Biosciences, Mississauga, ON, Canada) and stained intracellularly using PE-conjugated mouse anti-p24 mAb (clone KC57; Beckman Coulter, Brea, CA, USA; 1:100 dilution) in combination with Nef or Vpu rabbit antisera (1:1000 dilution). The percentage of

infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup>) was determined by gating on the living cell population according to a viability dye staining (Aqua Vivid; Thermo Fisher Scientific). Alternatively, cells were stained intracellularly with rabbit antisera raised against Nef or Vpu (1:1000) followed by BV421-conjugated anti-rabbit secondary antibody. Samples were acquired on an LSR II cytometer (BD Biosciences), and data analysis was performed using FlowJo v10.5.3 (Tree Star, Ashland, OR, USA).

### **Antibody-dependant cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) assay**

Measurement of ADCC using a fluorescence-activated cell sorting (FACS)-based infected cell elimination (ICE) assay was performed at 48 h post-infection. Briefly, HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were stained with AquaVivid viability dye and cell proliferation dye eFluor670 (Thermo Fisher Scientific) and used as target cells. Cryopreserved autologous PBMC effector cells, stained with cell proliferation dye eFluor450 (Thermo Fisher Scientific), were added at an effector: target ratio of 10:1 in 96-well V-bottom plates (Corning, Corning, NY). A 1:1000 final dilution of plasma or 5 µg/mL of anti-Env mAbs was added to appropriate wells and cells were incubated for 5 min at room temperature. The plates were subsequently centrifuged for 1 min at 300 × g, and incubated at 37 °C, 5 % CO<sub>2</sub> for 5 h before being fixed in a 2 % PBS-formaldehyde solution. Infected cells were identified by intracellular p24 staining as described above. Samples were acquired on an LSR II cytometer (BD Biosciences) and data analysis was performed using FlowJo v10.5.3 (Tree Star). The percentage of ADCC was calculated with the following formula:  $[(\% \text{ of p24}^+ \text{ cells in Targets plus Effectors}) - (\% \text{ of p24}^+ \text{ cells in Targets plus Effectors plus plasma}) / (\% \text{ of p24}^+ \text{ cells in Targets}) \times 100]$  by gating on infected lived target cells.

### **Virus neutralization assay**

TZM-bl target cells were seeded at a density of  $2 \times 10^4$  cells/well in 96-well luminometer-compatible tissue culture plates (PerkinElmer, Waltham, MA, USA) 24 h before infection. HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 Vpu<sup>-</sup> or Vpu<sup>+</sup> (in a final volume of 50 µl) was pre-incubated with the indicated amounts of mAbs for 1 h at 37 °C before adding to the target cells. Following an incubation of 24 h at 37 °C, 100 µl of media was added to each well. Two days later, the medium was removed from each well, and the cells were lysed by the addition of 30 µl of passive lysis buffer (Promega, Madison, WI, USA) followed by one freeze-thaw cycle. An LB 942 TriStar luminometer (Berthold



Technologies, Bad Wildbad, Germany) was used to measure the luciferase activity in each well after the addition of 100  $\mu$ L of Luciferin buffer (15 mM MgSO<sub>4</sub>, 15 mM KH<sub>2</sub>PO<sub>4</sub> [pH 7.8], 1 mM ATP, and 1 mM dithiothreitol) and 50  $\mu$ L of 1 mM Firefly D-luciferin (Prolume, Pinetop, AZ, USA).

### Plasma viral load measurements

Quantification of PVLs was done using the method described previously (Gibellini et al., 2004). Briefly, 100  $\mu$ L of blood was collected from mice at each time point by retroorbital bleed. Plasma viral RNA was extracted using the QIAamp viral RNA mini kit (QIAGEN, Hilden Germany) following the manufacturer's protocol. SYBR green real-time PCR assay was carried out in a 20- $\mu$ L PCR mixture volume consisting of 10  $\mu$ L of 2 $\times$  Quantitect SYBR green RT-PCR Master Mix (QIAGEN) containing HotStarTaq DNA polymerase, 0.5  $\mu$ L of 500 nM each oligonucleotide primer, 0.2  $\mu$ L of 100 $\times$  QuantiTect RT Mix (containing Omniscript and Sensiscript RTs), and 8  $\mu$ L of RNA extracted from plasma samples or standard HIV-1 RNA (from  $5 \times 10^5$  to 5 copies per 1 mL). Highly conserved sequences on the *gag* region of HIV-1 were chosen, and specific HIV-1 *gag* primers were selected. The sequences of HIV-1 *gag* primers are 5' TGCTATGTCAGTTCCTTGGTTCTCT 3' and 5'AGTTGGAGGACATCAAGCAGCCATGCAAAT 3'. Amplification was done in an Applied Biosystems 7500 real-time PCR system, and it involved activation at 45 °C for 15 min and 95 °C for 15 min followed by 40 amplification cycles of 95 °C for 15s, 60 °C for 15s, and 72 °C for 30s. For the detection and quantification of viral RNA, the real-time PCR of each sample was compared with threshold cycle value of a standard curve.

### Sequence analysis

The LOGO plot (Crooks et al., 2004) was created using the Analyze Align tool at the Los Alamos National Laboratory - HIV database which is based on the WebLogo program ([https://www.hiv.lanl.gov/content/sequence/ANALYZEALIGN/analyze\\_align.html](https://www.hiv.lanl.gov/content/sequence/ANALYZEALIGN/analyze_align.html)) and the HIV-1 database global curated and filtered 2019 alignment, including 6,223 individual Env protein sequences. The relative height of each letter within individual stack represents the frequency of the indicated amino acid at that position. The numbering of Env amino acid sequences is based on the HXB2 reference strain of HIV-1, where 1 is the initial methionine.

### **gp41 peptide ELISA**

Peptides corresponding to the gp41 C-C loop region (residues 583-618) were either previously described ([Gohain et al., 2016](#)) or purchased from Genscript (Piscataway, NJ, USA). A peptide corresponding to the SARS-CoV-2 Spike S2 stem helix (residues 1153-1163) was used as a negative control and was previously reported ([Li et al., 2021](#)). Peptides were prepared in PBS at a concentration of 1 µg/mL and were adsorbed to white 96-well plates (MaxiSorp Nunc) overnight at 4 °C. Coated wells were subsequently blocked with blocking buffer (Tris buffered saline [TBS] containing 0.1% Tween20 and 2% BSA) for 1 hour at room temperature. Wells were then washed four times with washing buffer (TBS containing 0.1% Tween20). Anti-gp41 246D and F240 or anti-gp120 A32 (50 ng/mL) were prepared in a diluted solution of blocking buffer (0.1 % BSA) and incubated with the peptide-coated wells for 90 minutes at room temperature. Plates were washed four times with washing buffer followed by incubation with horseradish peroxidase (HRP)-conjugated anti-human IgG secondary Ab (0.3 µg/mL in a diluted solution of blocking buffer [0.4% BSA]) for 1 h at room temperature, followed by four washes. HRP enzyme activity was determined after the addition of a 1:1 mix of Western Lightning Plus-ECL oxidizing and luminol reagents (Perkin Elmer Life Sciences). Light emission was measured with a LB942 TriStar luminometer (Berthold Technologies).

### **Surface plasmon resonance (SPR)**

Surface plasmon resonance assays were performed on a Biacore 3000 (Cytiva) with a running buffer of 10 mM HEPES pH 7.5 and 150 mM NaCl, supplemented with 0.05% Tween20 at 25 °C. The binding kinetics between the gp41 C-C loop and the 246D antibody were obtained in a format where 246D IgG was immobilized onto a Protein A sensor chip (Cytiva) with ~300 response units (RU) and serial dilutions of gp41 (583-618) synthetic peptide were injected with concentrations ranging from 0.488 to 31.25 nM. The protein A chip was regenerated with a wash step of 0.1 M glycine pH 2.0 and reloaded with IgG after each cycle. Kinetic constants were determined using a 1:1 Langmuir model in bimolecular interaction analysis (BIA) evaluation software.

## **QUANTIFICATION AND STATISTICAL ANALYSIS**

Statistics were analyzed using GraphPad Prism version 9.3.1 (GraphPad, San Diego, CA, USA). Every data set was tested for statistical normality and this information was used to apply the appropriate (parametric or nonparametric) statistical test. Statistical details of experiments are indicated in the figure legends. P values  $< 0.05$  were considered significant; significance values are indicated as \*  $P < 0.05$ , \*\*  $P < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $P < 0.001$ , \*\*\*\*  $P < 0.0001$ .

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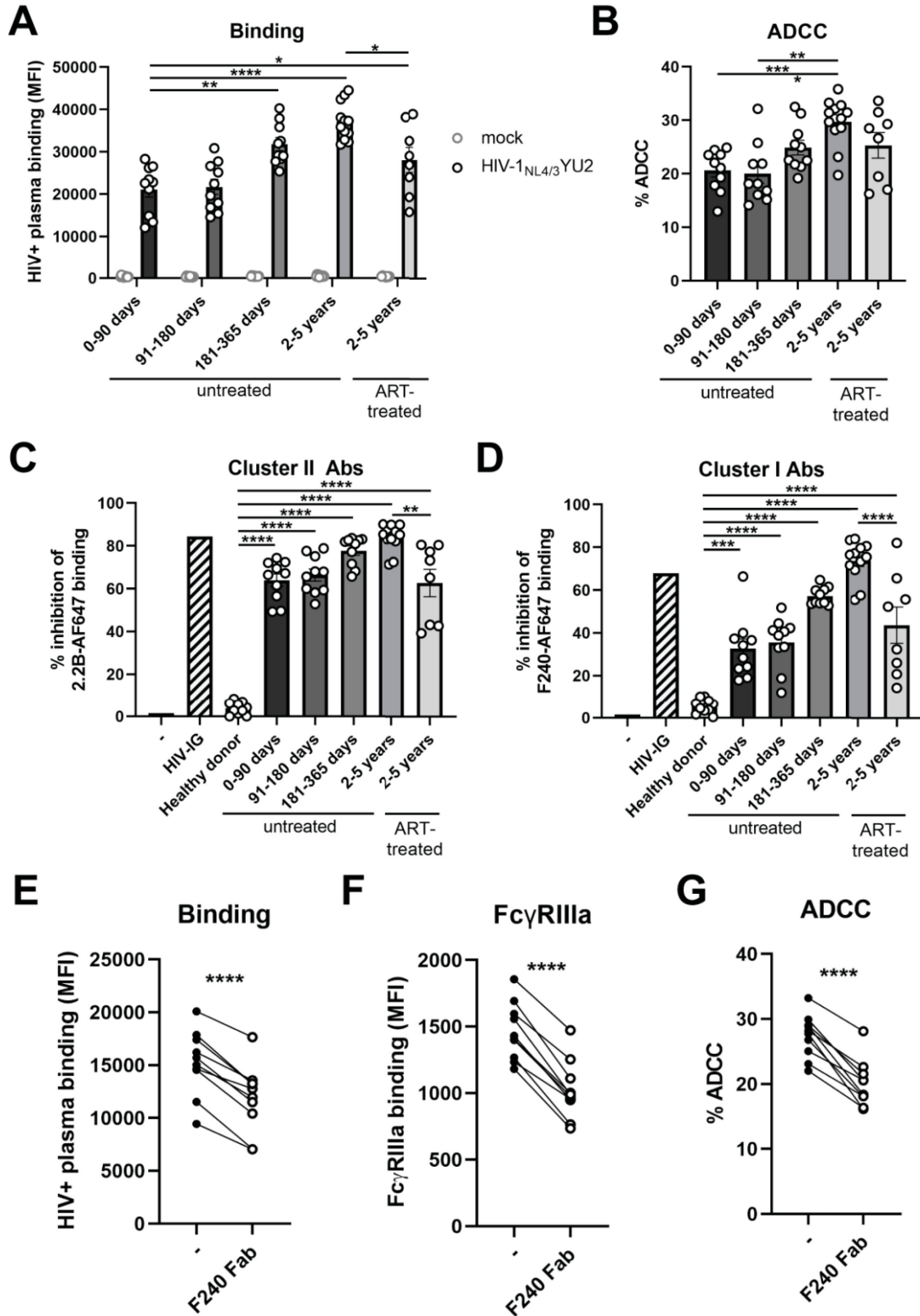
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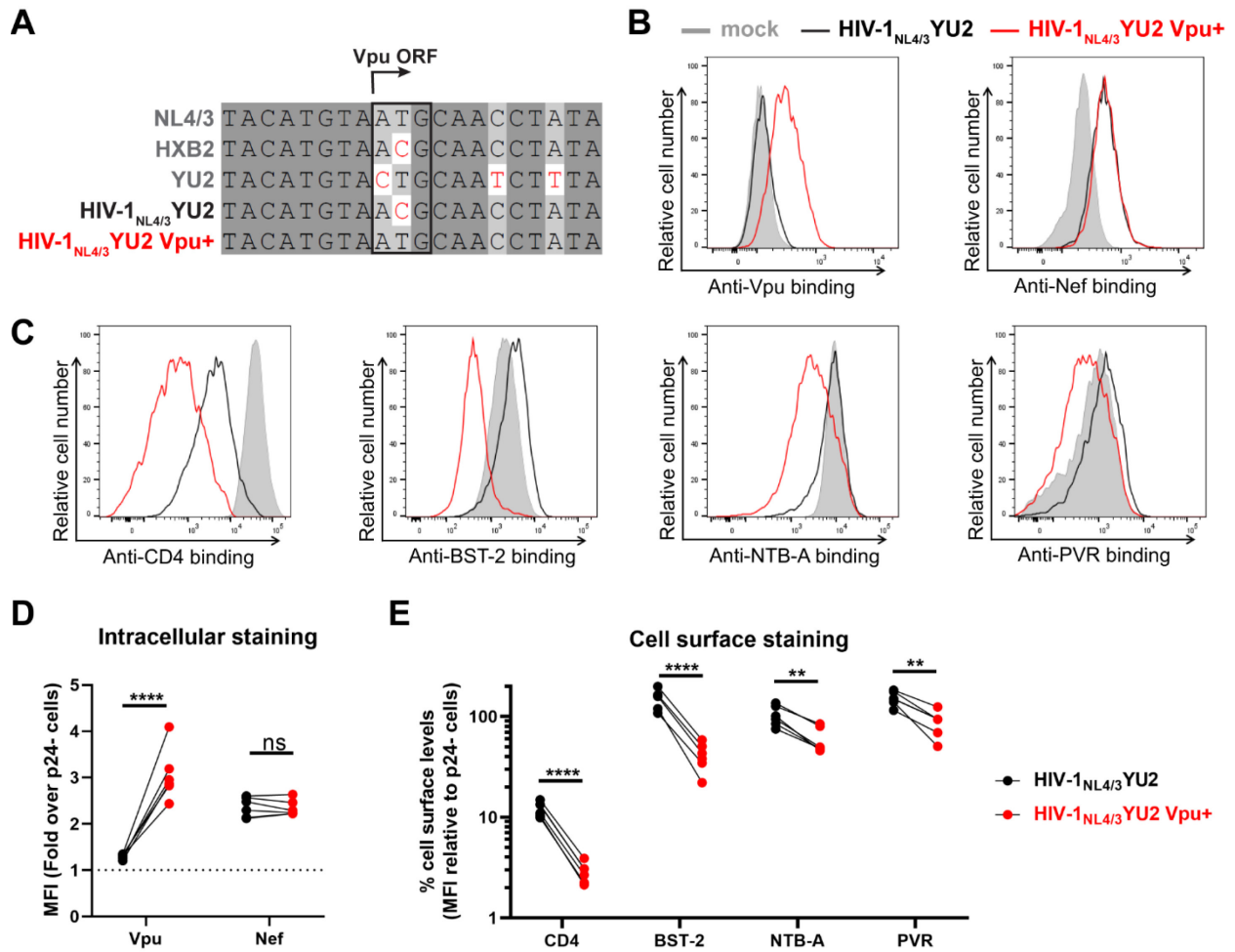
### 5.3.10 FIGURES



**Figure 5.2.1 - Cells infected with HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 are susceptible to nnAb-mediated ADCC responses.**

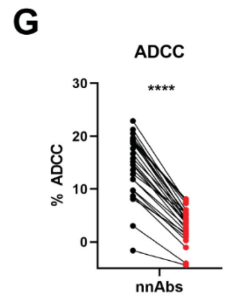
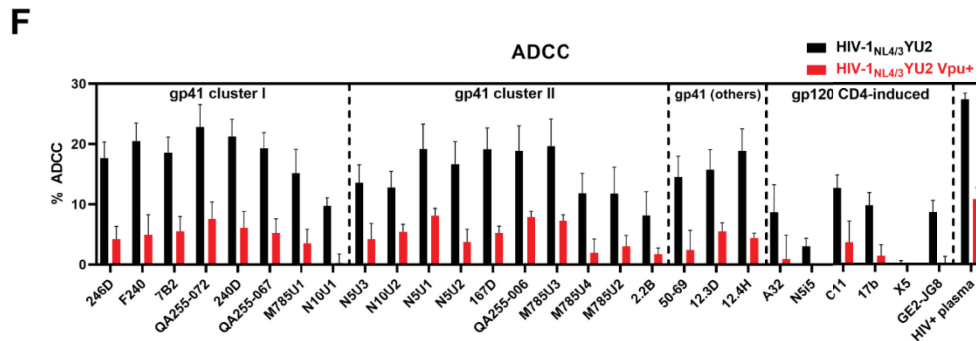
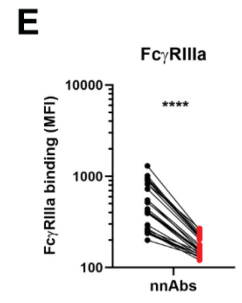
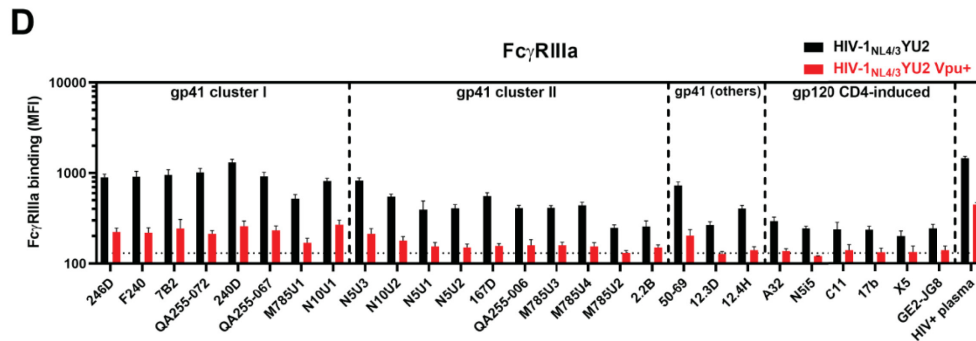
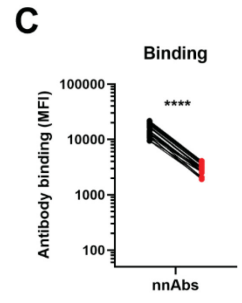
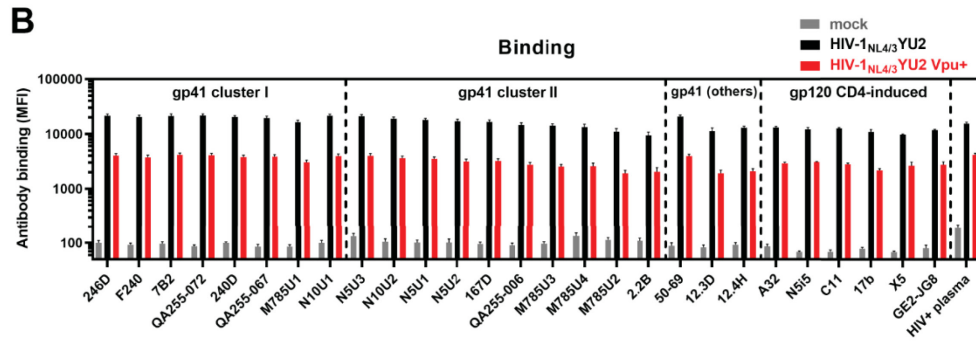
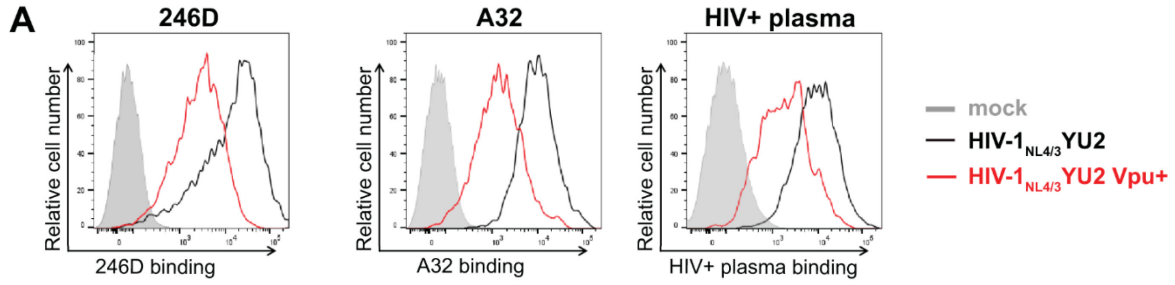
Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were either mock-infected (grey symbols) or infected with the HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 virus (black symbols). (A) Cell-surface staining and (B) ADCC responses mediated by plasma from 50 different HIV-1-infected individuals categorized by the time post-infection and the antiretroviral therapy (ART) treatment status. (A) The graph shows the mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) on the whole cell population (mock) or infected p24<sup>+</sup> cell population (HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2). (C-D) The binding of Alexa Fluor 647 (AF647)-precoupled (C) anti-gp41 cluster II 2.2B mAb or (D) anti-gp41 cluster I F240 mAb was evaluated in presence of unlabeled human plasma from healthy controls or HIV-1-infected individuals. A pool of purified immunoglobulins from HIV-1-infected individuals (HIV-IG) was used as a positive control. (E) Plasma binding, (F) FcγRIIIa binding and (G) ADCC responses mediated by plasma from 10 untreated HIV-1-infected individuals (2-5 years) were evaluated in presence of competing anti-gp41 cluster I F240 Fab fragment. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means (SEM). Statistical significance was tested using (A-D) one-way ANOVA with a Holm-Sidak post-test or (E-G) a paired t test (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).





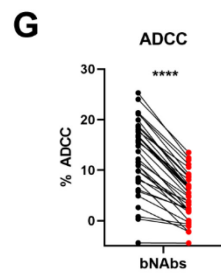
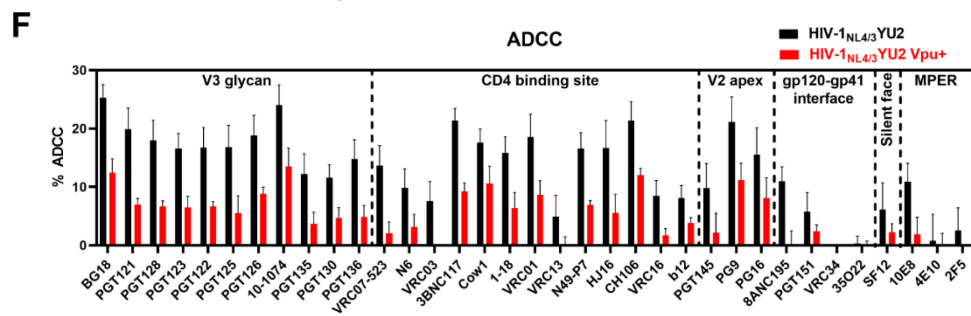
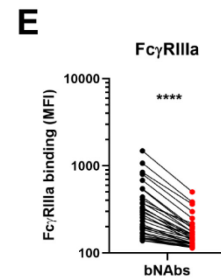
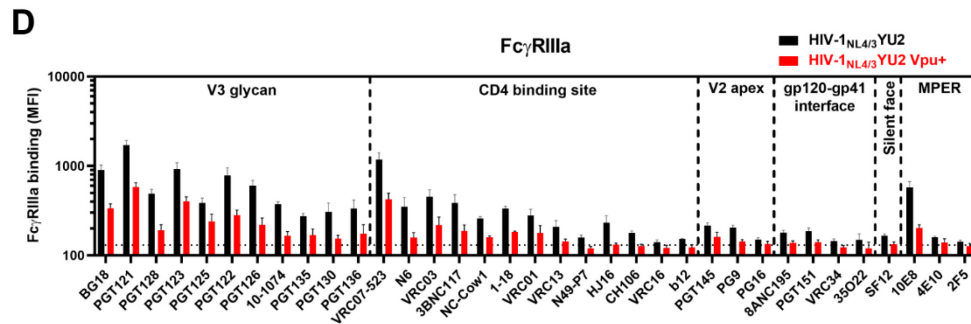
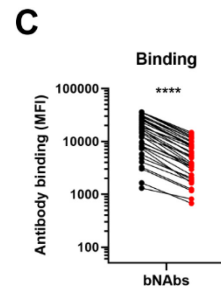
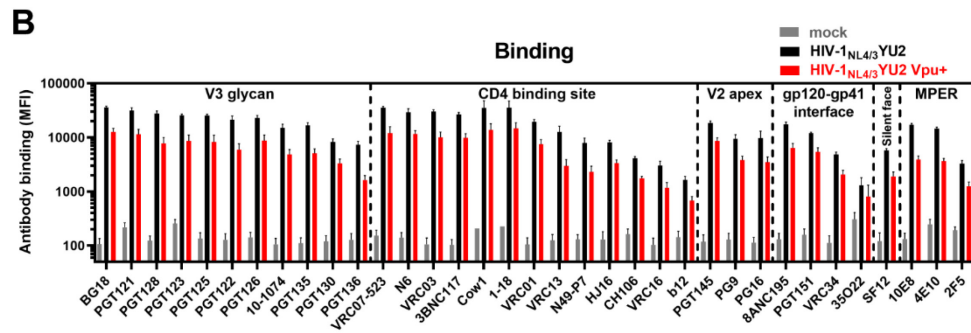
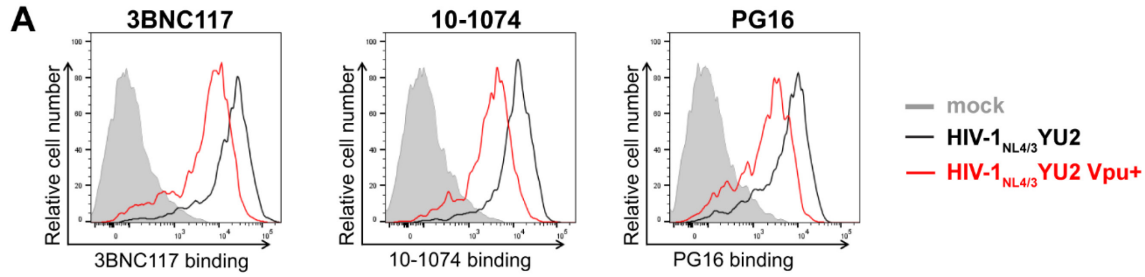
**Figure 5.2.2 - Reversion of Vpu open reading frame in the HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub> YU2 construct.**

(A) Sequence alignment of the Vpu open reading frame (ORF) region of selected HIV-1 reference isolates (NL4/3, HXB2, YU2) with the HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub> YU2 construct and its Vpu<sup>+</sup> counterpart. Identical nucleotides are shaded in dark gray, conserved nucleotides in light gray and non-identical nucleotides are highlighted in red. The *vpu* start codon is highlighted by a black box. (B-E) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells either mock-infected or infected with the HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub> YU2 virus or its Vpu<sup>+</sup> counterpart were stained for intracellular detection of (B,D) viral proteins Vpu and Nef and cell-surface detection of (C,E) cellular proteins CD4, BST-2, NTB-A and PVR. (B-C) Histograms depicting representative stainings for (B) viral proteins and (C) their target substrates. (D-E) The graphs show the mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained from five independent experiments using primary cells from five different healthy donors. (D) Viral protein levels were reported as a fold increase in the signal detected on infected p24<sup>+</sup> cells compared to uninfected p24<sup>-</sup> cells. (E) Cellular protein levels were reported as a percentage of detection at the surface of infected p24<sup>+</sup> cells compared to uninfected p24<sup>-</sup> cells. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means (SEM). Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test or a Mann-Whitney U test based on statistical normality (\*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).



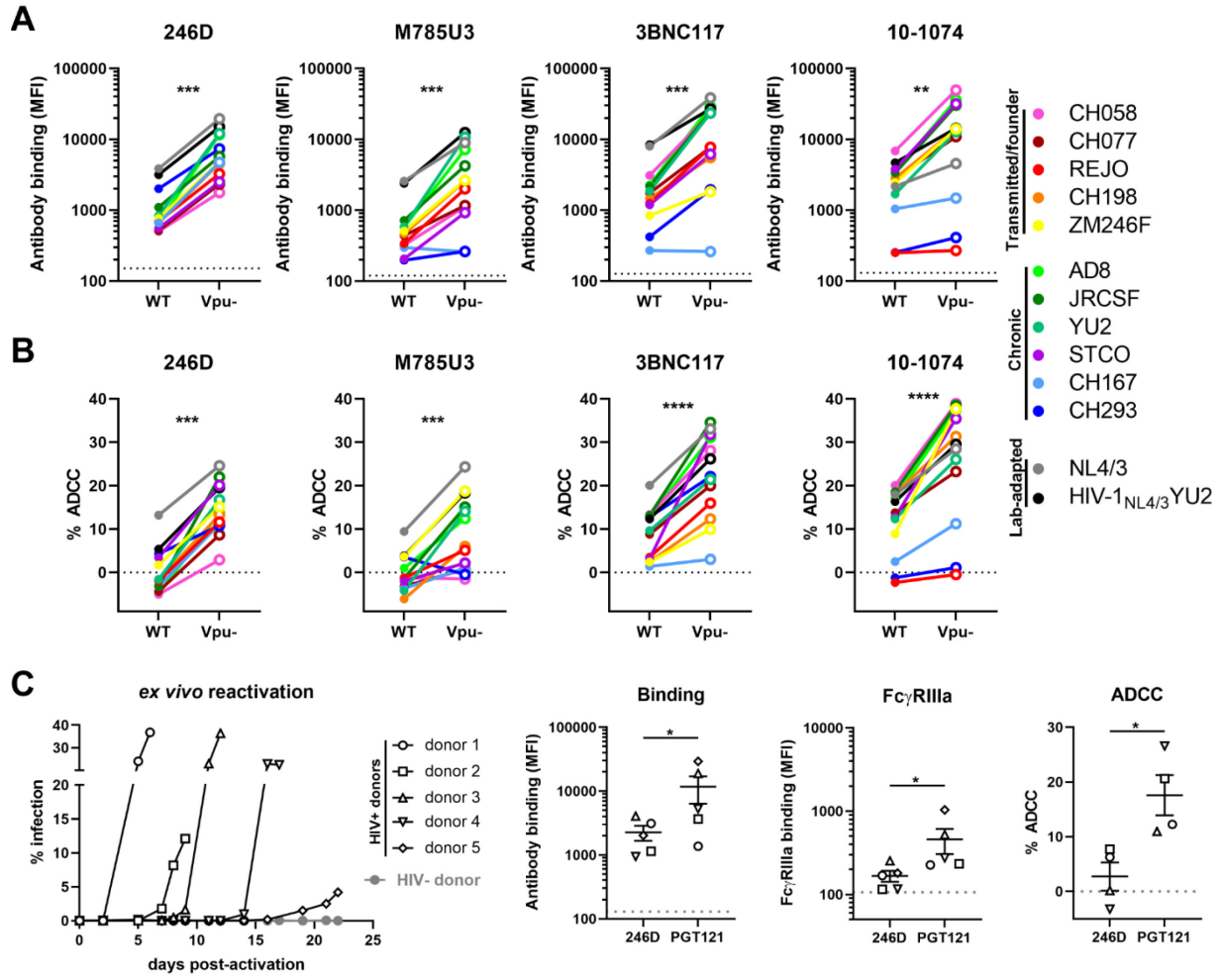
**Figure 5.2.3 - Vpu expression impairs Env recognition and Fc-effector functions mediated by anti-Env nnAbs.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were either mock-infected or infected with the HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 virus or its Vpu<sup>+</sup> counterpart. (A-E) Cell surface staining performed using anti-gp41 non-neutralizing antibodies targeting the gp41 cluster I, cluster II or other gp41 regions as well as anti-gp120 CD4-induced antibodies and plasma from 10 HIV-1-infected individuals (HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma). Antibody binding was detected either by using (A-C) Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated anti-human secondary Abs or (D-E) by using biotinylated recombinant soluble dimeric FcγRIIIa followed by the addition of Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated streptavidin. (A) Histograms depicting representative stainings using anti-gp41 cluster I 246D mAb, anti-gp120 cluster A A32 mAb and HIV<sup>+</sup> plasma. (B,D) The graphs represent the mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained from the infected p24<sup>+</sup> cell population using cells from five different healthy donors. (D) The horizontal dotted line represents the signal obtained in absence of mAb. (F-G) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 viruses were used as target cells. Autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in a FACS-based ADCC assay. (F) The graph represents the percentages of ADCC obtained in the presence of the respective antibodies using cells from five different healthy donors. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means (SEM). (C,E,G) Statistical significance was tested using a paired t test (\*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001).



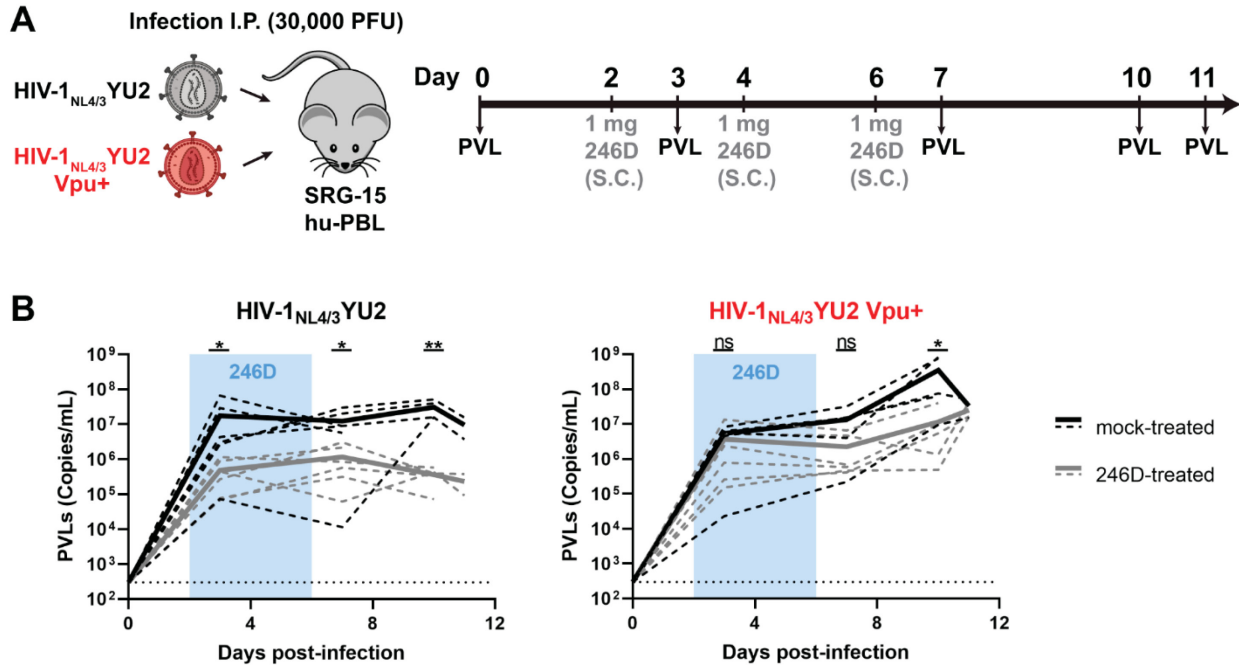
**Figure 5.2.4 - Vpu expression decreases Env recognition and Fc-effector functions mediated by anti-Env bNAbs.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were either mock-infected or infected with the HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 virus or its Vpu<sup>+</sup> counterpart. **(A-E)** Cell surface staining performed using broadly neutralizing antibodies targeting the gp120 V3 glycan supersite, CD4 binding site, V2 apex and silent face, the gp120-gp41 interface and the gp41 MPER. Antibody binding was detected either by using **(A-C)** Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated anti-human secondary Abs or **(D-E)** by using biotinylated recombinant soluble dimeric FcγRIIIa followed by the addition of Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated streptavidin. **(A)** Histograms depicting representative stainings using anti-CD4 binding site 3BNC117, anti-V3 glycan 10-1074 and anti-V2 apex PG16 mAbs. **(B,D)** The graphs represent the mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained from the infected p24<sup>+</sup> cell population using cells from five different healthy donors. **(D)** The horizontal dotted line represents the signal obtained in absence of mAb. **(F-G)** Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 viruses were used as target cells. Autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in a FACS-based ADCC assay. **(F)** The graph represents the percentages of ADCC obtained in the presence of the respective antibodies using cells from five different healthy donors. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means (SEM). **(C,E,G)** Statistical significance was tested using a paired t test (\*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001).



**Figure 5.2.5 - The ability of Vpu to limit anti-Env ADCC responses is conserved among different HIV-1 strains.**

(A-B) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with HIV-1 clade B and clade C transmitted/founder (CH058, CH077, REJO, CH198, ZM246F), chronic (AD8, JR-CSF, YU2, STCO, CH167, CH293) and lab-adapted (NL4/3, HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2) wild-type (WT) strains or their Vpu- counterpart. (A) Cell surface staining performed using anti-gp41 nnAbs 246D and M785U3, as well as bNAbs 3BNC117 and 10-1074. Antibody binding was detected by using Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated anti-human secondary Abs. (B) Infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were used as target cells and autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in a FACS-based ADCC assay. (C) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from five different ART-treated HIV-1-infected individuals were isolated and activated with PHA-L/IL-2 to expand the endogenous virus. Cell surface staining and ADCC experiments were performed upon reactivation. Antibody binding was detected using Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated anti-human secondary Abs or biotinylated recombinant soluble dimeric FcγRIIIa followed by the addition of Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated streptavidin. *Ex vivo*-expanded infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from four HIV-1-infected individuals were used as target cells and autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in a FACS-based ADCC assay. ADCC susceptibility was only measured when the percentage of infection (p24<sup>+</sup> cells) was higher than 10%. (A,C) The horizontal dotted lines represent the signal obtained in absence of mAb. (A-C) The antibody binding and FcγRIIIa graphs represent the mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained from the infected p24<sup>+</sup> cell population. The ADCC graphs represent the percentages of ADCC obtained in the presence of the respective antibodies. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means (SEM). Statistical significance was tested using (A-B) a paired t test or Wilcoxon signed-rank test based on statistical normality or (C) a Mann-Whitney U test (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).

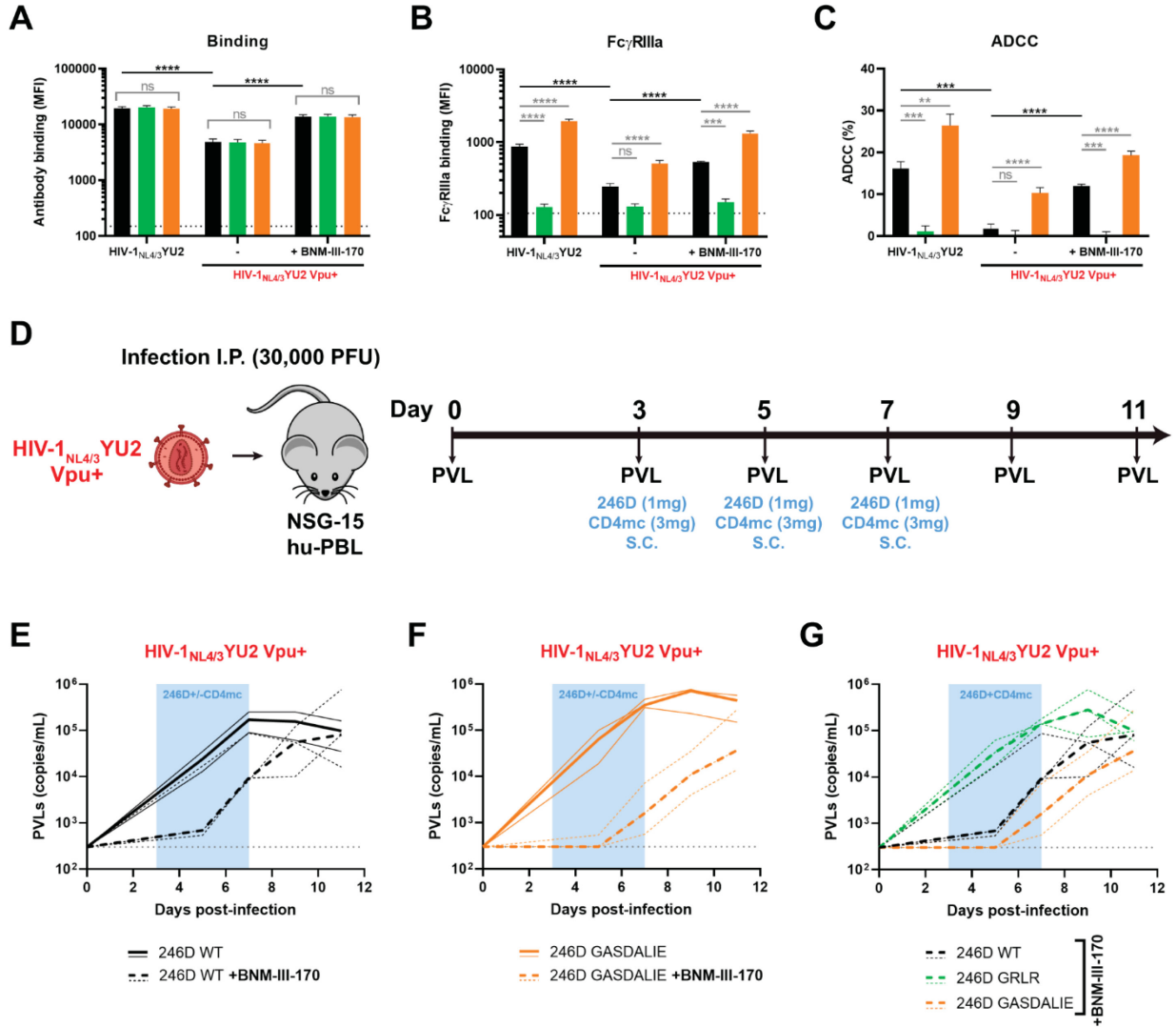


**Figure 5.2.6 - Vpu promotes HIV-1 replication in humanized mice treated with non-neutralizing antibody 246D.**

(A) Experimental outline. SRG-15-Hu-PBL mice were infected with HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub> YU2 or its Vpu+ counterpart intraperitoneally. At day 2, 4 and 6 post-infection, mice were administered 1mg of 246D mAb subcutaneously (S.C.). Mice were bled routinely for plasma viral load (PVL) quantification. (B) PVL levels were measured by quantitative real-time PCR (limit of detection = 300 copies/mL, dotted line). Twelve mice were infected using each virus; six of them were mock-treated (black lines) and the other six were treated with 246D mAb (gray lines). PVL measurements for individual mice are shown as dashed lines and mean values for each regimen are shown as solid lines. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test or a Mann-Whitney U test based on statistical normality (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; ns, nonsignificant).



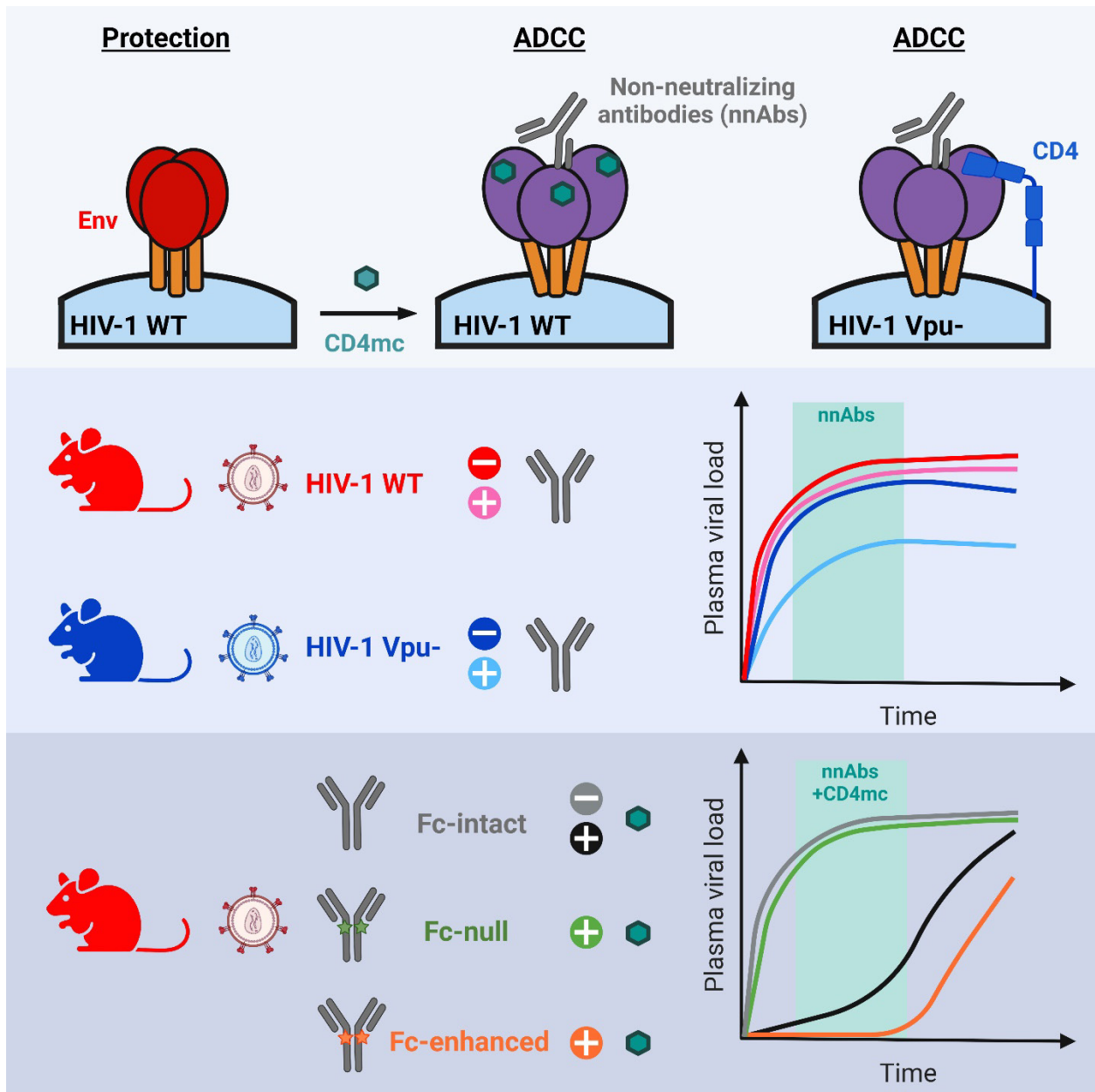
■ 246D WT    ■ 246D GRLR    ■ 246D GASDALIE



**Figure 5.2.7 - CD4 mimetics and Fc engineering enhance the antiviral activity of anti-gp41 nnAbs *in vivo*.**

(A-C) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were either infected with HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 virus or its Vpu<sup>+</sup> counterpart. Forty-eight hours post-infection, cell surface staining and ADCC responses were measured in presence of the anti-gp41 nnAb 246D WT or its Fc-mutated variants to impair (G236R/L328R; GRLR) or to enhance (G236A/S239D/A330L/I332E; GASDALIE) Fc-effector functions. Alternatively, cells infected with HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 Vpu<sup>+</sup> were treated with CD4mc BNM-III-170 during staining and ADCC experiments. Antibody binding was detected using (A) Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated anti-human secondary Abs or (B) by using biotinylated recombinant soluble dimeric FcγRIIIa followed by the addition of Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated streptavidin. (A-B) The graphs represent the mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained from the infected p24<sup>+</sup> cell population using cells from five different healthy donors. The horizontal dotted lines represent the signal obtained in absence of mAb. (C) Infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were used as target cells and autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in a FACS-based ADCC assay. The graph represents the percentages of ADCC obtained in the presence of the respective antibodies using cells from five different healthy donors. Error bars indicate means ± standard errors of the means (SEM). (A-C) Statistical significance was tested using a one-way ANOVA with a Holm-Sidak post-test or a Kruskal-Wallis test with a Dunn's post-test when comparing between the different 246D Fc variants and an unpaired t test or a Mann-Whitney U test when comparing between viruses or treatment. Appropriate statistical test (parametric or nonparametric) was applied based on dataset distribution normality (\*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant). (D) Experimental outline. NSG-15-Hu-PBL mice were infected with HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 Vpu<sup>+</sup> intraperitoneally. At day 3, 5 and 7 post-infection, mice were administered 1 mg of 246D mAb subcutaneously (S.C.) alongside or without of 3 mg of CD4mc BNM-III-170 (n=2-3 per cohort). (E-G) Plasma viral loads (PVL) were measured by quantitative real-time PCR (limit of detection = 300 copies/mL, dotted gray line) upon treatment with (E) 246D WT +/- CD4mc BNM-III-170, (F) 246D GASDALIE +/- CD4mc BNM-III-170 or (G) 246D WT, GRLR or GASDALIE in presence of CD4mc BNM-III-170. PVL measurements for individual mice are shown as thin lines and median values for each cohort as thick lines.

### 5.3.11 GRAPHICAL ABSTRACT



**Figure 5.2.8 - Graphical abstract**

HIV-1 Vpu restricts Fc-mediated effector functions mediated by anti-Env non-neutralizing antibodies *in vivo*

### 5.3.12 HIGHLIGHTS AND ETOC BLURB

#### Highlights

- Vpu limits HIV-1 Env recognition and ADCC responses mediated by nnAbs and bNAbs
- Vpu deletion impairs HIV-1 replication in humanized mice in presence of nnAbs
- CD4 mimetics and Fc engineering boost nnAbs antiviral activities *in vivo*

#### eTOC blurb

Prévost et al. demonstrate that the HIV-1 accessory protein Vpu protects infected cells from Fc-effector functions both *in vitro* and *in vivo*. Furthermore, it shows that non-neutralizing antibodies (nnAb) fail to alter HIV replication in humanized mice unless small CD4-mimetics are used to “open-up” Env and enable nnAb interaction.

### 5.3.13 SUPPLEMENTAL TABLE

**Table 5.2.S1 - Cohort of HIV-1-infected individuals.**

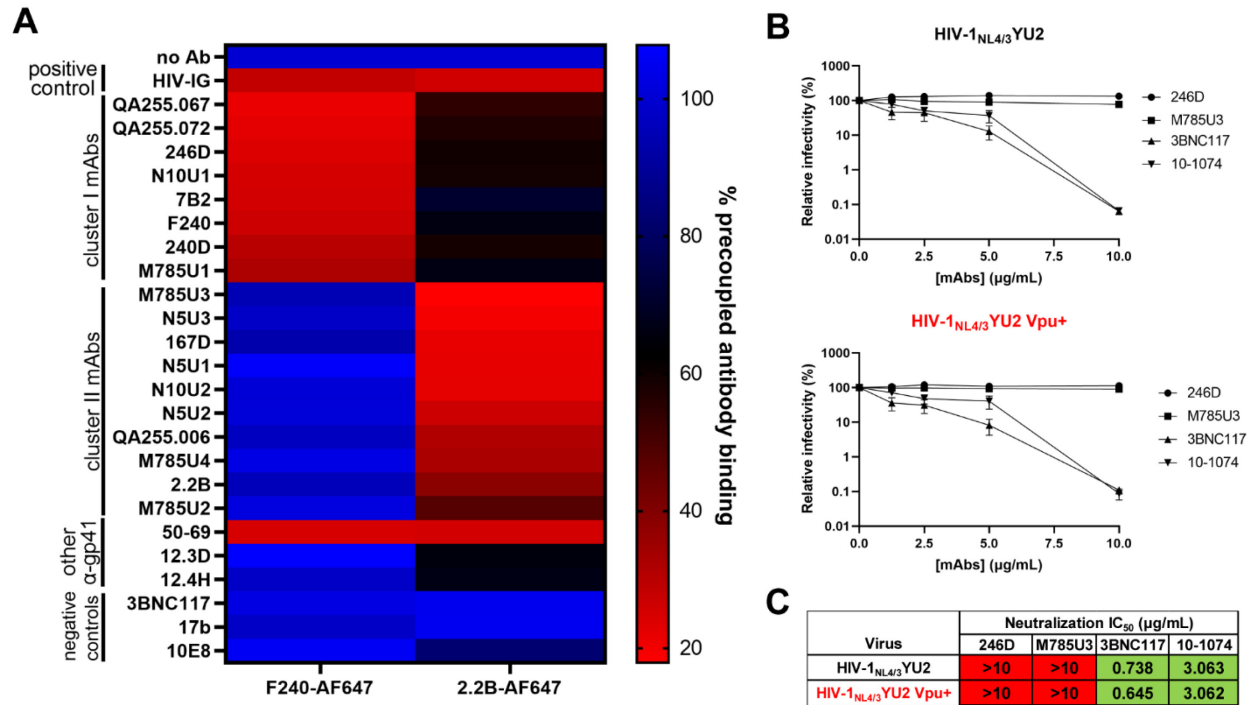
Group	Gender		Age (years) <sup>a</sup>	Days since infection <sup>a</sup>	Days since ART <sup>a</sup>	Days between infection and ART <sup>a</sup>	Viral load (copies/mL) <sup>a</sup>	CD4 count (cells/mm <sup>3</sup> ) <sup>a</sup>
	Male	Female						
Group 1 0-90 days untreated	10	0	40 [18-55]	68 [42-97]	N/A	N/A	60848 [132-391113]	470 [430-829]
Group 2 91-180 days untreated	10	0	38 [20-58]	135 [109-177]	N/A	N/A	21663 [6641-195302]	650 [420-1235]
Group 3 181-365 days untreated	10	0	31 [24-45]	240 [203-314]	N/A	N/A	27785 [1866-260852]	490 [230-770]
Group 4 2-5 years untreated	11	1	36 [23-54]	1158 [856-1810]	N/A	N/A	29234 [14255-809600]	421 [200-1311]
Group 5 2-5 years ART-treated	7	1	37 [23-60]	983 [794-1570]	690 [19-879]	428 [192-986]	50 [40-3337]	615 [170-1149]

<sup>a</sup>Values shown are group medians with ranges in bracket.

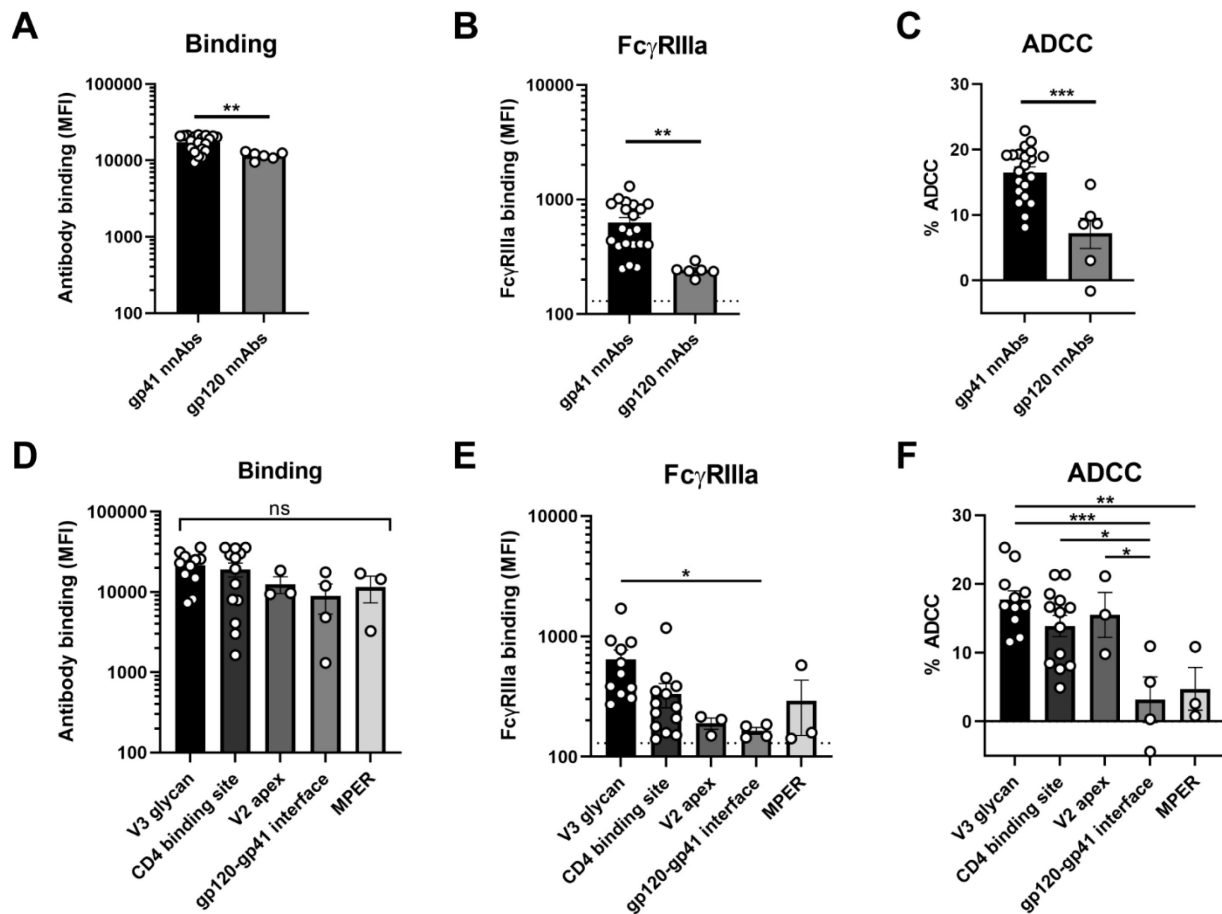
ART: antiretroviral therapy

N/A: not applicable

### 5.3.14 SUPPLEMENTAL FIGURES

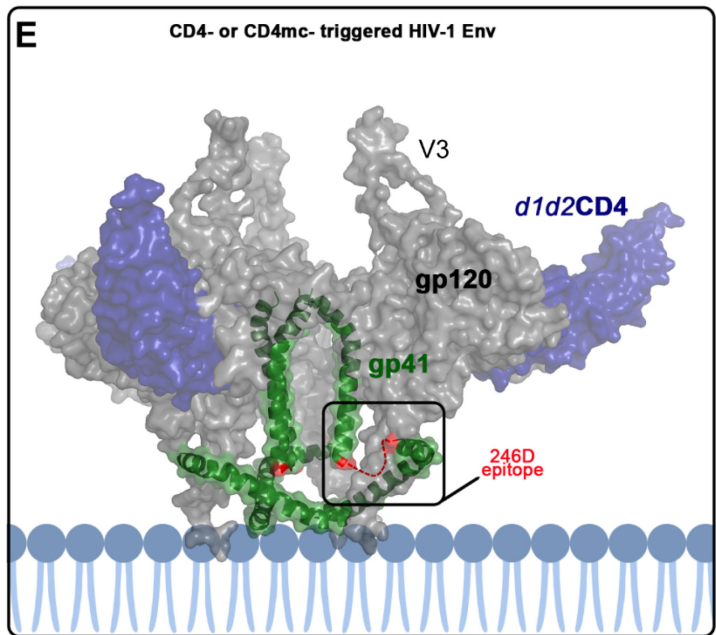
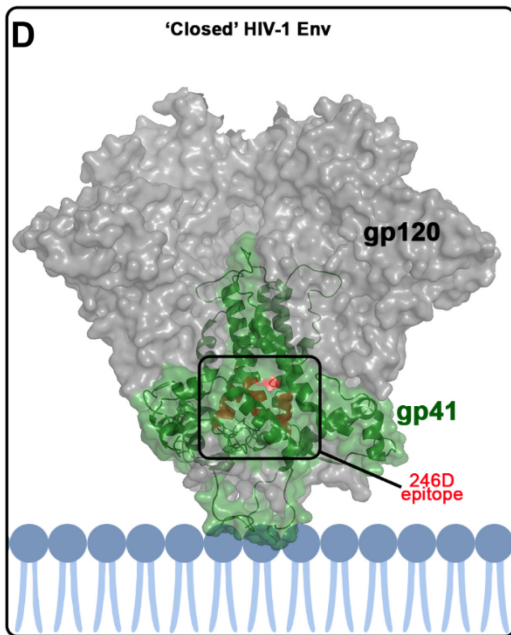
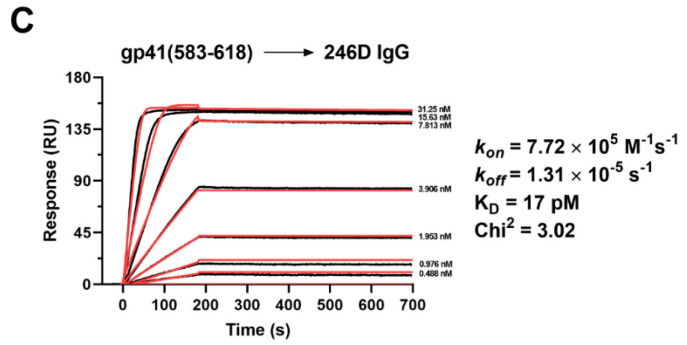
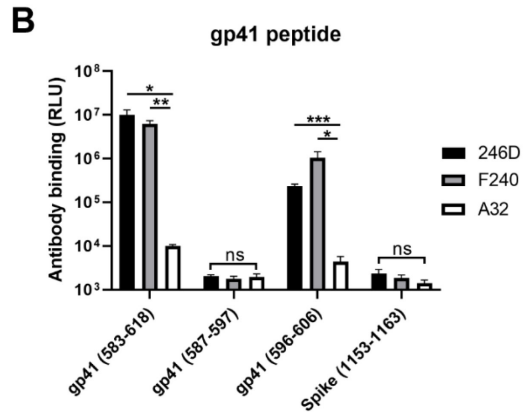
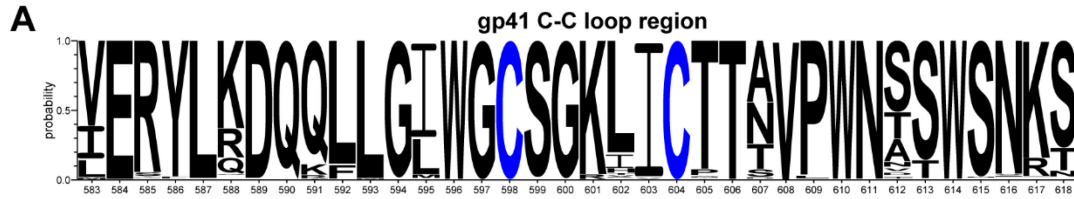


**Figure 5.2.S1 - Classification of anti-gp41 non-neutralizing antibodies in two main clusters.** (A) The binding of Alexa Fluor 647 (AF647)-precoupled anti-gp41 cluster I F240 mAb or anti-gp41 cluster II 2.2B mAb was evaluated on HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2-infected cells in presence of a panel of unlabeled anti-gp41 mAbs to determine epitope cross-competition. A pool of purified immunoglobulins from HIV-1-infected individuals (HIV-IG) was used as a positive control. Monoclonal antibodies with known non-competing epitopes (3BNC117, 17b, 10E8) were used as negative controls. (B) Lentiviral particles were produced from HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2 IMC expressing Vpu or not. Viruses were incubated with serial dilutions of anti-Env mAbs (246D, M785U3, 3BNC117, 10-1074) at 37°C for 1 h prior to infection of TZM-bl target cells. The infectivity at each Ab concentration tested is shown as the percentage of infection without Ab for each virus. Quadruplicate samples were analyzed in each experiment. The data shown are the means of results obtained in three independent experiments. Error bars indicate means +/- the SEM. Neutralization half maximal inhibitory concentration (IC<sub>50</sub>) values are summarized in (C).



**Figure 5.2.S2 - Epitope specificity dictates anti-Env ADCC responses mediated by nnAbs and bNAbs.**

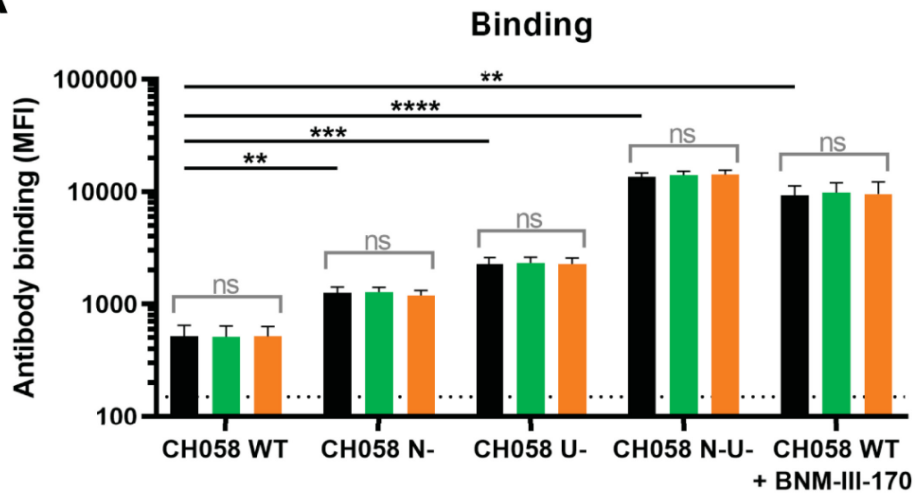
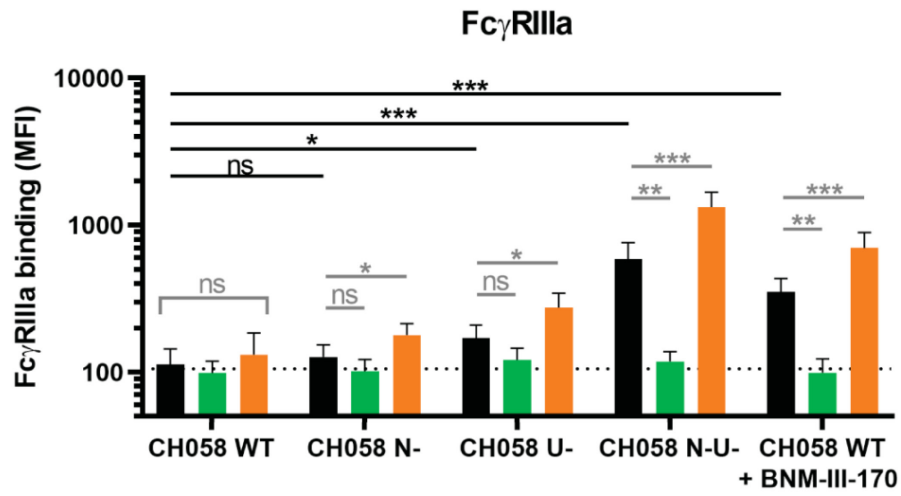
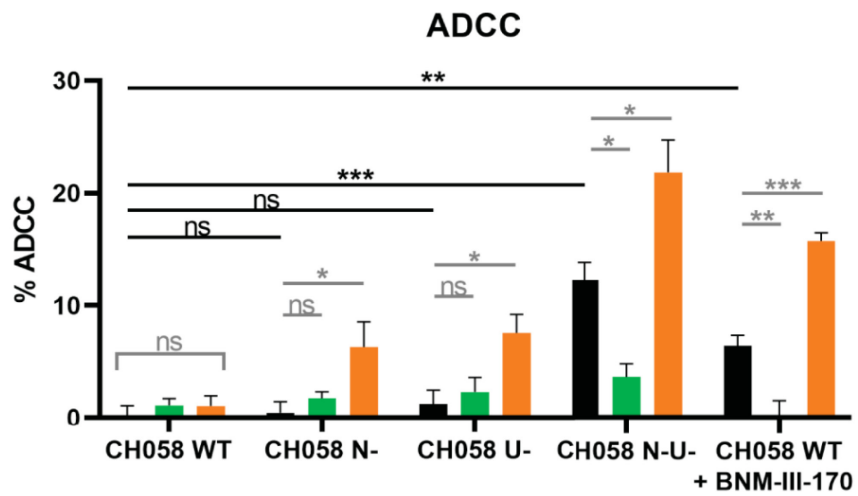
(A-F) Levels of antibody binding, Fc $\gamma$ RIIIa binding and ADCC responses mediated by (A-C) nnAbs and (D-F) bNAbs as classified by epitope specificity (gp41 nnAbs, gp120 nnAbs; V3 glycan, CD4-binding site, V2 apex, gp120-gp41 interface, MPER) as performed on primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with HIV-1<sub>NL4/3</sub>YU2. Statistical significance was tested using (A-C) an unpaired t test or a Mann-Whitney U test and (D-F) a one-way ANOVA with a Holm-Sidak post-test or a Kruskal-Wallis test with a Dunn's post-test based on statistical normality (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).





**Figure 5.2.S3 - Monoclonal antibody 246D recognizes a gp41 linear peptide occluded in the closed Env trimer.**

(A) Logo depiction of the frequency of each amino acid from the HIV-1 Env gp41 C-C loop region (residues 583-618) in all HIV-1 isolates. The height of the letter indicates its frequency among all strains. The 2019 Los Alamos database-curated filtered web Env alignment was used as the basis for this figure, which contains 6,223 individual Env amino acid sequences. Residue numbering is based on the HXB2 reference strain of HIV-1. (B) Indirect ELISA was performed using HIV-1 Env gp41 peptides corresponding to the C-C loop region, or a SARS-CoV-2 Spike S2 peptide as a negative control. Peptide-coated wells were incubated with anti-gp41 246D and F240 mAbs, as well as anti-gp120 cluster A A32 mAb as a negative control. Antibody binding was detected using HRP-conjugated anti-human IgG and was quantified by relative light units (RLU). The data shown are the means of results obtained in three independent experiments. Error bars indicate means  $\pm$  the SEM. (C) 246D binding affinity and kinetics to gp41 C-C loop using surface plasmon resonance (SPR). The 246D IgG was immobilized as the ligand on a Protein A chip and HIV-1 gp41 (583-618) peptide used as analyte from 0.488 to 31.25 nM (2-fold serial dilution). Kinetic constants were determined using a 1:1 Langmuir model in bimolecular interaction analysis (BIA) evaluation software (experimental readings depicted in black and fitted curves in red). (D-E) Mapping of the <sup>596</sup>WGCSGKLICTT<sup>606</sup> epitope within available structures of HIV-1 Env. (D) The closed conformation of HIV-1 Env (PDB: 6ULC) (PMID: 31931014) from a cryo-EM structure of full-length HIV-1 Env bound to the Fab of the antibody PG16 (not shown), with the 246D epitope highlighted in red. The 246D epitope is fully occluded in the closed the trimer and not accessible for antibody binding. (E) The CD4-triggered HIV-1 Env trimer (PDB: 3J70) (PMID: 26039348) from a computational model of full-length HIV-1 Env bound to the d1d2 domain of CD4 and the Fab of antibody 17b (not shown). In the CD4 triggered trimer the 246D epitope is largely disordered (highlighted with a broken red line for one of three gp41 protomers), but it is exposed at the surface of trimer and available for antibody recognition.

**A****B****C**

**Figure 5.2.S4 - CD4 mimetics and Fc modifications boost the capacity of anti-gp41 nnAbs to mediate ADCC responses.**

(A-C) Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were either infected with transmitted/founder virus CH058 wild-type (WT) or its Nef and/or Vpu-deleted counterparts (N-, U-, N-U-). Forty-eight hours post-infection, cell surface staining and ADCC responses were measured in presence of the anti-gp41 nnAb 246D WT or Fc-mutated to impair (G236R/L328R; GRLR) or enhance (G236A/S239D/A330L/I332E; GASDALIE) Fc-effector functions. Alternatively, cells infected with CH058 WT were treated with CD4mc BNM-III-170 during staining and ADCC experiments. Antibody binding was detected using (A) Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated anti-human secondary Abs or (B) by using biotinylated recombinant soluble dimeric FcγRIIIa followed by the addition of Alexa Fluor 647-conjugated streptavidin. (A-B) The graphs represent the mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained from the infected p24<sup>+</sup> cell population using cells from five different healthy donors. The horizontal dotted lines represent the signal obtained in absence of mAb. (C) Infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were used as target cells and autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in a FACS-based ADCC assay. The graph represents the percentages of ADCC obtained in the presence of the respective antibodies using cells from five different healthy donors. Error bars indicate means ± standard errors of the means (SEM). (A-C) Statistical significance was tested using a one-way ANOVA with a Holm-Sidak post-test or a Kruskal-Wallis test with a Dunn's post-test when comparing between the different 246D Fc variants and an unpaired t test or a Mann-Whitney U test when comparing between viruses or treatment. Appropriate statistical test (parametric or nonparametric) was applied based on dataset distribution normality (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).

**CHAPITRE VI - UTILISATION DES MIMÉTIQUES  
MOLÉCULAIRES DE CD4 POUR OUVRIR ENV**

## 6.1 Préambule

Dans ce chapitre, nous explorons de nouvelles stratégies afin de sensibiliser les cellules infectées à l'ADCC médiée par les nnAbs en modulant la conformation d'Env avec des mimétiques moléculaires de CD4 (CD4mc). Les CD4mc sont de petites molécules versatiles capables de neutraliser les particules virales en s'insérant dans la cavité Phe43 d'Env, ce qui leur permet de compétitionner directement avec la liaison de CD4 et également de libérer l'énergie nécessaire à la fusion en induisant des changements conformationnels menant à « l'ouverture » du trimère d'Env. Les CD4mc ont également été démontrés comme étant capable de sensibiliser spécifiquement les cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC médiées par le sérum HIV<sup>+</sup>, tout en protégeant les cellules non-infectées avoisinantes de l'ADCC en empêchant la gp120 soluble d'interagir avec le CD4 présent à leur surface. Afin de continuer le développement de CD4mc plus puissants et à plus large spectre, nous avons identifié des mécanismes potentiels dictant la sensibilité et la résistance à ces molécules. Nous avons également développé des stratégies complémentaires pour promouvoir l'élimination des cellules infectées en présence de CD4mc et de nnAbs. Dans l'**article 10**, nous avons étudié certains résidus polymorphiques situés à l'intérieur et au pourtour de la cavité Phe43, présent naturellement dans une proportion non-négligeable des souches prédominantes en circulation. La présence d'une histidine en position 375, observée chez les souches CRF01\_AE, confère une résistance complète au CD4mc en « remplissant » la cavité Phe43, tandis qu'une thréonine à cette position confère une sensibilité accrue au CD4mc en stabilisant l'insertion de la molécule dans cette cavité. La présence de polymorphismes dans les couches topologiques du domaine interne de la gp120 bordant la cavité Phe43 peut mener à une restructuration du site de liaison à CD4 et contribuer à la résistance de certaines souches au CD4mc. De nouveaux CD4mc pouvant accommoder ces variations sont présentement en développement. Dans l'**article 11**, nous avons identifié les niveaux d'Env présents à la surface des cellules infectées comme un autre facteur limitant dans l'induction de la réponse ADCC par les CD4mc. Afin de remédier à ce problème, nous proposons l'utilisation d'IFN-I ou d'IL-27, tous deux capables de stimuler l'expression du facteur de restriction BST-2. En dépit de l'activité de Vpu, l'augmentation de BST-2 par ces cytokines a pour effet d'augmenter l'accumulation d'antigènes viraux à la surface cellulaire, ce qui augmente significativement la capacité du CD4mc à sensibiliser les cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs.

## **ARTICLE 10**

**Le domaine interne de l'enveloppe du VIH-1 façonne la cavité Phe43 et le site de liaison à CD4**

## *The HIV-1 Env gp120 Inner Domain Shapes the Phe43 Cavity and the CD4 Binding Site*

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### **6.2.1 RÉSUMÉ**

Les glycoprotéines d'enveloppe du VIH-1 (Env) subissent des changements de conformation lors de l'interaction de la sous-unité gp120 avec le récepteur CD4. Les couches topologiques du domaine interne de la gp120 facilitent la transition d'Env vers la conformation liée à CD4. Le CD4 interagit avec la gp120 en introduisant sa phénylalanine 43 (Phe43) dans une cavité ("la cavité Phe43") située à l'interface entre les domaines interne et externe de la gp120. Les mimétiques moléculaires de CD4 (CD4mc) peuvent se lier dans la cavité Phe43 et déclencher des changements de conformation similaires à ceux induits par CD4. L'obtention de structures atomiques de CD4mc en complexe avec la gp120 CRF01\_AE modifiée a révélé l'importance de ces couches du domaine interne de la gp120 dans la stabilisation de la cavité Phe43 et la formation du site de liaison à CD4. Notre étude révèle une interaction complexe entre le domaine interne de la gp120 et la cavité Phe43 et met en lumière des informations utiles pour le développement de CD4mc plus puissants.

### **6.2.2 ABSTRACT**

The HIV-1 envelope glycoproteins (Env) undergo conformational changes upon interaction of the gp120 exterior glycoprotein with the CD4 receptor. The gp120 inner domain topological layers facilitate the transition of Env to the CD4-bound conformation. CD4 engages gp120 by introducing its phenylalanine 43 (Phe43) in a cavity ("the Phe43 cavity") located at the interface between the inner and outer gp120 domains. Small CD4-mimetic compounds (CD4mc) can bind within the Phe43 cavity and trigger conformational changes similar to those induced by CD4. Crystal structures of CD4mc in complex with a modified CRF01\_AE gp120 core revealed the importance of these gp120 inner domain layers in stabilizing the Phe43 cavity and shaping the CD4 binding site. Our studies reveal a complex interplay between the gp120 inner domain and the Phe43 cavity and generate useful information for the development of more-potent CD4mc.

### **6.2.3 IMPORTANCE**

The Phe43 cavity of HIV-1 envelope glycoproteins (Env) is an attractive druggable target. New promising compounds, including small CD4 mimetics (CD4mc), were shown to insert deeply into this cavity. Here, we identify a new network of residues that helps to shape this highly

conserved CD4 binding pocket and characterize the structural determinants responsible for Env sensitivity to small CD4 mimetics.

#### 6.2.4 INTRODUCTION

The human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1) envelope glycoproteins (Env) mediate virus entry into host cells to initiate the viral replication cycle. The gp120 exterior Env subunit mediates the initial interaction with the CD4 receptor. The gp120 phenylalanine 43 (Phe43) cavity is a conserved region of 150 Å<sup>3</sup> where Phe43 of CD4 makes numerous contacts with conserved gp120 residues and is connected with the gp120 inner domain and the coreceptor binding site via a water-filled solvent channel ([1](#), [2](#)). This interaction triggers major conformational changes allowing coreceptor (i.e., CCR5 and CXCR4) binding ([3–10](#)). Subsequent conformational changes in gp41 lead to the formation of the six-helix bundle, resulting in the fusion of the viral envelope and the target cell membrane ([11](#), [12](#)). CD4-induced (CD4i) conformational changes in the gp120 inner domain involve three flexible topological layers (layers 1, 2, and 3). Despite a lack of contact with CD4, the gp120 inner domain layers govern CD4 triggering by participating in conformational transitions within gp120 and regulating the interaction with gp41 ([13](#), [14](#)). Structural rearrangements between layer 1 and layer 2 were previously shown to facilitate the transition of the envelope glycoprotein trimer from the unliganded state to the CD4-bound state and to stabilize gp120-CD4 interactions ([14–16](#)). Layer 3 was previously shown to govern the efficiency of the initial gp120 interaction with CD4, a function that can also be fulfilled by filling the Phe43 cavity with a bulky residue at position 375 ([13](#), [14](#), [17](#)).

Env represents the only viral antigen exposed on the surface of virions and infected cells and thus is the primary target for antibodies (Abs). Despite targeting different epitopes, most broadly neutralizing antibodies (bNAbs) preferentially recognize the “closed” conformation of Env ([18](#), [19](#)). Conversely, CD4 binding forces Env to adopt “open” conformations ([20](#), [21](#)), allowing its recognition by non-neutralizing Abs (nnAbs) ([22](#), [23](#)). Env-CD4 complexes at the surface of HIV-1-infected cells were previously shown to be efficiently recognized by CD4-induced (CD4i) Abs, which are present in sera from HIV-1-infected individuals and can mediate potent antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) responses ([24–28](#)). HIV-1 evolved to minimize the exposure of these CD4i epitopes by limiting Env-CD4 interaction. HIV-1

accomplishes this through its Nef and Vpu accessory proteins, which decrease the overall amounts of Env (via Vpu-mediated BST-2 downregulation) and CD4 at the cell surface (23, 29, 30). In addition, efficient Env internalization also limits ADCC responses (31, 32). Motivated by the vulnerability of the CD4-bound conformation of Env to ADCC, new approaches to “force” Env to adopt this conformation using small CD4-mimetic compounds (CD4mc) have been developed (33). The antiviral activity of CD4mc is not limited to ADCC; these compounds can compete for Env-CD4 interaction, mediate viral particle inactivation by prematurely triggering Env, and sensitize infectious viral particles to neutralization by otherwise nnAbs (34–37). The potential clinical benefit of CD4mc was highlighted in two recent *in vivo* studies showing how CD4mc can act as prophylactic agents to decrease HIV-1 acquisition in humanized mice and simian-human immunodeficiency virus (SHIV)-challenged nonhuman primates (NHP) (38, 39).

Interestingly, Env transitions to the CD4-bound conformation can be modulated by single-residue substitutions. For example, the replacement of the well-conserved group M serine at position 375 by a large hydrophobic residue, such as tryptophan, fills the Phe43 cavity; this substitution alters Env conformation by predisposing gp120 to spontaneously assume a state closer to the CD4-bound conformation (13, 14, 40). While S375 is well conserved in the majority of group M HIV-1 isolates, CRF01\_AE Env possesses a Phe43 cavity-filling residue at position 375 (H375) (41–43). The presence of H375 was linked to the natural exposure of CD4i epitopes in CRF01\_AE strains, resulting in their enhanced susceptibility to ADCC responses (42). Besides modulating Env interaction with human CD4 (41), residue 375 was shown to modulate SHIV binding to rhesus monkey CD4 and replication in nonhuman primates (44), highlighting its critical role in viral pathogenesis. By performing structural, *in silico*, and functional analyses, using CD4mc as probes, we uncovered how the gp120 inner domain shapes the Phe43 cavity and the CD4 binding site.

## 6.2.5 RESULTS

### **Comparison of Phe43 cavity and coevolving inner domain layer residues among HIV-1 clades.**

We previously reported that six residues within the gp120 inner domain layers coevolved with Phe43 cavity residue 375 to facilitate CD4 interaction (41). We analyzed all available HIV-1 sequences together or segregated by clades using the NIH Los Alamos HIV database to determine the degree of conservation of these residues located in layer 1 (residue 61), layer 2 (residues 105 and 108), and layer 3 (residues 474, 475, and 476) (collectively named LM, for layer mutants) and in the Phe43 cavity (residue 375). The consensus sequences of these residues from CRF01\_AE strains diverge from those of all other major HIV-1 subtypes (clades A, B, C, D, F, G, and CRF02\_AG) (Fig. 6.1.1A). Among the coevolving inner domain residues, most of the clades (except clade F [N474 and K476]) share the same consensus sequence (Y61, H105, I108, D474, M475, and R476), which differs from that seen with the residues found in CRF01\_AE strains (H/Q61, Q105, V108, N474, I475, K476). Serine 375 is the predominant residue (75%) in all HIV-1 major subtypes, except for CRF01\_AE (Fig. 6.1.1A to C). Other residues were found to occupy position 375 (T375, N375, I375, and M375), with T375 being present in more than 8% of all HIV-1 strains (Fig. 6.1.1B). T375 is present in clade B (16.9%), clade A1 (5%), and clade C (4.87%) but also in clade D (7.76%), CRF02\_AG (5.26%), and clade F (2.27%). Interestingly, CRF01\_AE strains have a highly conserved histidine at position 375 (H375; >99%) (41–43).

### **Phe43 cavity and gp120 inner domain layer changes render CRF01\_AE strains susceptible to CD4mc antiviral activities.**

To evaluate the potential impact of the LM residues on shaping the Phe43 cavity, we decided to use CD4mc as probes. Several cocrystals of different CD4 mimics and gp120 cores exist, providing detailed structural information regarding their mode of interaction within the cavity (1, 37, 45–51). Briefly, both CD4mc (molecular weight [MW], ~500 Da) and CD4 miniproteins (~3 kDa) were optimized to display a large hydrophobic group (phenyl or cyclohexyl ring) that projects deeply into the Phe43 cavity, allowing them to reach the cavity edge where residue 375 is located. These projections were found to go deeper into the Phe43 cavity than CD4 Phe43 residue itself, rendering these molecules more sensitive to changes occurring within the

cavity. It has been previously reported that the presence of bulky cavity-filling residues at this position (H375, W375, Y375, R375) confers resistance to CD4mc and CD4 miniproteins by abrogating their interaction deep within the Phe43 cavity ([34](#), [36](#), [47](#), [48](#), [50](#), [52](#), [53](#)). Replacement of the naturally occurring CRF01\_AE H375 with a serine residue (H375S) has been shown to reduce CD4 binding. Introduction of the LM substitutions (H/Q61Y, Q105H, V108I, N474D, I475M, and K476R) restored this interaction ([41](#)). However, whether these Phe43 cavity and inner domain changes affect CD4mc sensitivity has not yet been determined. First, we evaluated the effect of the H375S change on the sensitivity of two CRF01\_AE isolates (tier 1 92TH023 and tier 2 CM244) to neutralization by different CD4 mimics, including soluble CD4 (sCD4), CD4mc (BNM-III-170), and a CD4 miniprotein (M48U1) ([33](#), [54](#)). In agreement with previous results ([41](#)), replacement of histidine 375 by a serine residue (H375S) in both HIV-1<sub>CRF01\_AE</sub> Envs completely abolished the susceptibility of pseudotyped virions to sCD4 neutralization (**Fig. 6.1.2A and B to G**). Viral particles bearing both CRF01\_AE Envs were resistant to neutralization by BNM-III-170 and M48U1; this was expected due to the presence of the cavity-filling histidine at position 375 (H375). Interestingly, replacement of the bulky histidine by a serine at this position (H375S) did not restore neutralization sensitivity to these CD4 mimics (**Fig. 6.1.2C to G**). However, the H375S change in combination with the LM mutations (LM plus HS [LM+HS]) dramatically enhanced the susceptibility of both CRF01\_AE strains to neutralization by both CD4 mimics. Of note, the presence of different combinations of single-layer or multiple-layer changes together with the H375S change was not sufficient to restore sensitivity to neutralization by BNM-III-170 or M48U1 (see **Fig. 6.1.S1C to G** in the supplemental material). This was different from the results seen with respect to sCD4 neutralization, where viruses bearing LM changes without the Q61Y change were also sensitive to sCD4 neutralization (**Fig. 6.1.S1A and G**). These data highlight subtle differences in the mode of CD4mc and sCD4 recognition of Env. Altogether, these results indicate that all of the LM changes are required to restore CD4mc sensitivity to CRF01\_AE strains presenting an “empty” (H375S) Phe43 cavity.

As a small residue at position 375 such as serine appears to be required for CD4mc sensitivity, we investigated the possibility that another naturally occurring small residue such as threonine (T), isoleucine (I), or asparagine (N) might affect HIV-1 sensitivity to CD4mc. We first introduced these changes into clade B HIV-1<sub>JRFL</sub> ENV and performed neutralization assays using

the CD4mc BNM-III-170. Among all the residue 375 substitutions tested, T375 was found to be more sensitive to BNM-III-170 inhibition than the wild type (WT) (S375) and all the other variants (**Fig. 6.1.3A**). We then introduced this change into a CRF01\_AE Env alone (H375T) and in combination with the six layer mutations (LM+HT). Strikingly, the H375T change was sufficient to sensitize the CRF01\_AE strain to BNM-III-170 neutralization in the absence of the LM mutations. Thus, despite having similar small side chains, T375 was found to be sufficient to sensitize the CRF01\_AE virus to neutralization by BNM-III-170 whereas S375 required the LM mutations to do so. Addition of the LM changes together with H375T (LM+HT) further increased the sensitivity of the CRF01\_AE virus to BNM-III-170 neutralization, resulting in levels comparable to those seen with the LM+HS mutant (**Fig. 6.1.3B and D**). We confirmed the enhanced susceptibility of T375-bearing viruses to BNM-III-170 with additional clade B (YU2) and clade A1 (BG505) strains. Increased neutralization by CD4mc was seen in the presence of T375 in these two strains (**Fig. 6.1.3C and D**). Strikingly, HIV-1<sub>BG505</sub> has intrinsic resistance to CD4mc BNM-III-170 which can be overcome by the presence of T375.

Since CD4mc were also shown to sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC by CD4-induced (CD4i) Abs present in HIV-positive (HIV<sup>+</sup>) sera ([27](#), [33](#), [55–57](#)), we evaluated the impact of the Phe43 and LM changes on the susceptibility of CRF01\_AE-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells to ADCC mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera in the presence of the CD4mc BNM-III-170. Briefly, primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells cultured from uninfected individuals were infected with the wild-type (WT) CRF01\_AE transmitted/founder (TF) 40061 strain or with an isogenic virus with the LM and 375 changes. This infectious molecular clone (IMC) was isolated from a participant in the acute HIV-1 infection RV217 cohort ([58](#)). In line with the results presented in **Fig. 6.1.2 and 6.1.3** (see also **Fig. 6.1.S1**), replacement of CRF01\_AE H375 with a threonine, but not a serine, was sufficient to gain sensitivity to CD4mc, leading to an increase in binding and ADCC mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 6.1.4**). Addition of the LM changes to the resistant H375S variant conferred BNM-III-170 sensitivity but did not further enhance the susceptibility of the H375T variant.

To gain a better understanding of the impact that the LM and 375 changes have on Env conformation, we developed an assay to indirectly measure the capacity of BNM-III-170 to interact with Env. Briefly, CD4-negative cells were transfected with HIV-1<sub>CRF01\_AE</sub> 92TH023 or

CM244 Env variants. At 48 h post-transfection, Env-expressing cells were incubated with sCD4 in the presence of the CD4mc BNM-III-170 or an equivalent amount of the vehicle (dimethyl sulfoxide [DMSO]). Binding of sCD4 to cell surface Env was detected using an anti-CD4 mAb (OKT4), which recognizes the CD4 D3 domain and therefore does not compete for gp120 binding. The ability of BNM-III-170 to interact with Env was inferred by calculating the decrease in the level of sCD4 binding to Env in the absence of CD4mc (DMSO) or in its presence (**Fig. 6.1.3E to G**). In agreement with neutralization results, the occupancy of the Phe43 cavity of CRF01\_AE strains by BNM-III-170 was increased as a consequence of a combination of Phe43 cavity and inner domain changes (LM+HS and LM+HT) or of the H375T mutation change alone. We observed a decrease of at least 50% in sCD4 binding for both CRF01\_AE strains with these mutants (**Fig. 6.1.3E and F**). Similarly, CD4mc competed more efficiently for sCD4 binding in the presence of the S375T change for the three additional Envs tested (JRFL, YU2, BG505) (**Fig. 6.1.3G**). Using this assay, we also tested a panel of anti-Env antibodies, where bNAbs (3BNC117, NIH45-46 G54W, PG16, PGT151, and PGT128) preferentially recognize the “closed” trimer ([18](#), [19](#), [59](#)) and nnAbs (17b, 19b, F240, and A32) preferentially recognize the “open” trimer ([18](#), [19](#), [27](#), [60](#)). In agreement with the higher level of occupancy of the Phe43 cavity by BNM-III-170 in the presence of T375 or the LM+HS mutations, for these mutants, treatment of Env-expressing cells with the CD4mc BNM-III-170 more effectively decreased binding of bNAbs to the “closed” Env conformation (**Fig. 6.1.S2A and B and E to G**) and concomitantly enhanced binding of nnAbs to the “open” conformation (**Fig. 6.1.S2C and D and H to J**). Overall, the nature of the residue 375 and its coevolving inner domain residues regulate the susceptibility of the CRF01\_AE strains to both neutralization and ADCC.

### **Phe43 cavity and layer residues modulate the sensitivity of HIV-1 of major clades to CD4mc antiviral activities.**

In contrast with CRF01\_AE strains, most strains from pandemic HIV-1 major clades (clades A, B, C, D, G, and CRF02\_AG) harbor inner domain residues that coevolved with the presence of a small residue at position 375 (e.g., S375), making them potentially sensitive targets for CD4mc antagonist action. The presence of naturally occurring T375 in a significant fraction of these clades (up to 16.9% in clade B) might affect the susceptibility of these strains to CD4mc. Considering that T375 was found to be the residue that conferred the highest sensitivity to CD4mc

in the clade B JRFL strain (**Fig. 6.1.3**) and among all CRF01\_AE strains tested (**Fig. 6.1.3 and 6.1.4**), we introduced the T375 change into the HIV-1<sub>JRFL</sub> IMC and evaluated the capacity of BNM-III-170 to expose epitopes recognized by sera from 10 HIV-1-infected individuals at the surface of infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells. In line with the neutralization data (**Fig. 6.1.3**), replacement of S375 with a threonine residue (S375T) significantly enhanced the recognition of JRFL-infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera in the presence of BNM-III-170 (**Fig. 6.1.5A and B**). We also tested two additional primary clade B viruses (HIV-1<sub>CH58</sub> and HIV-1<sub>CH77</sub>) that naturally harbor T375 (**Fig. 6.1.6A**). Replacement of T375 in these two different TF viruses with a serine (T375S) strongly reduced the sensitivity of HIV-1<sub>CH77</sub> to CD4mc but appeared to have no effect on HIV-1<sub>CH58</sub> (**Fig. 6.1.5B**). However, the CH58 T375S mutant was less sensitive to CD4mc BNM-III-170 at concentrations lower than the concentration used in the staining and ADCC assays (50 μM) (**Fig. 6.1.6B**). A similar phenotype was also observed with another clade B strain (HIV-1<sub>YU2</sub>), where the variant with T375 was more sensitive to BNM-III-170 at low concentrations (**Fig. 6.1.6C**). In all cases, a threonine residue at position 375 enhanced Env recognition by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera in the presence of BNM-III-170 (**Fig. 6.1.5A and B and 6.1.6B and C**). Importantly, enhanced recognition translated into enhanced susceptibility to ADCC responses (**Fig. 6.1.5C and D**).

Next, we evaluated a panel of 12 clade B and clade C primary viruses, including viruses from acute infections (transmitted/founder strains) (CH40, CH58, CH77, CH185, CH198, CH236, CH470, CH505, and CH850) and chronic infections (CH167, RHGA, STCO), for their susceptibility to BNM-III-170. We observed a significant increase in binding of HIV<sup>+</sup> sera by BNM-III-170 with all viruses tested but one (CH198) (**Fig. 6.1.5E**); the increase was greater for viruses harboring a naturally occurring T375 (**Fig. 6.1.5F**). The higher responsiveness of viruses harboring a T375 (CH58, RHGA, STCO, CH77, and CH236) to BNM-III-170 led to a significant increase in ADCC responses for all HIV<sup>+</sup> sera tested, whereas only a few (2/7) viruses harboring a S375 showed a significant increase in ADCC upon CD4mc addition (**Fig. 6.1.5G and H**). In brief, the presence of a naturally occurring T375 residue in clade B and clade C primary virus Envs increases susceptibility to CD4mc.

Since T375 was found to confer the highest sensitivity to BNM-III-170 in all strains tested, we sought to determine whether this was specific to this CD4mc or applicable to others as well.



Therefore, we selected different generations and families of CD4mc known to engage gp120 within the Phe43 cavity. The NBD-556 compound was originally identified through a screen for Env-CD4 interaction inhibitors (61) and consists of a halogenated phenyl ring linked with a tetramethyl-piperidine via an oxalamide linker (Fig. 6.1.7A). The DMJ-II-121 compound was derived from the NBD-556 analog JRC-II-191 through the substitution of the piperidine ring for an indane ring with a guanidinium group at position 2 (Fig. 6.1.7B) to improve its Env antagonism potency (46). Other DMJ-II-121 analogs were synthesized to harbor additional chemical groups on the indane ring at position 5 (BNM-III-170, BNM-IV-147, SMK-II-48, MCG-III-051), position 6 (BNM-IV-197, JP-III-48, AEG-I-249, AEG-I-259), or position 7 (MCG-III-051) (45). To this panel of small molecules, we added a new compound (MCG-IV-210) derived from a recent high-throughput screen aimed to identify small molecules able to stabilize the CD4-bound conformation (37). Its structure resembles that of the NBD-556 analogs, but it has a shorter amide linker and an N-substituted piperidine ring (Fig. 6.1.7C). The panel of CD4mc was tested for the ability to induce Env conformational changes at the surface of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with HIV-1<sub>CH58</sub> WT or its T375S variant. Strikingly, all CD4mc tested were able to increase the exposure of the epitope recognized by the CD4i 17b mAb at the surface of WT-infected cells to similar extents (Fig. 6.1.7D to F). Introduction of the T375S change significantly diminished this ability for the less potent compounds, including MCG-IV-210, both NBD-556 analogs, and two DMJ-II-121 analogs (AEG-I-259 and MCG-III-051). The ability of these five CD4mc to enhance 17b binding to HIV-1<sub>JRFL</sub>-infected cells was increased by the replacement of S375 with a threonine residue (Fig. 6.1.7F). Similar results were obtained in experiments evaluating the ability of these CD4mc to increase the binding of HIV<sup>+</sup> sera to CH58-infected and JRFL-infected cells (Fig. 6.1.7G to I). Altogether, our binding and functional analyses indicate that natural HIV-1 polymorphism in Ser/Thr 375 modulates Env interaction with CD4mc of different classes.

As shown in Fig. 6.1.2 to 6.1.4 (see also Fig. 6.1.S1), specific inner domain layer residues (LM mutations) also modulate Env sensitivity to CD4mc in CRF01\_AE strains. We investigated whether this could be extended to strains from other HIV-1 major clades. We replaced HIV-1 consensus inner domain residues in the clade B HIV-1<sub>YU2</sub> Env with the residues that specifically coevolved with H375 in CRF01\_AE strains (Y61H, H105Q, I108V, D474N, M475I, R476K). These changes (LM mutations) were introduced in combination with different residues at position

375 (S375, T375, or H375). Remarkably, using the sCD4 binding competition assay, the introduction of these LM changes totally abrogated the sensitivity of YU2 Env to CD4mc, but the presence of the S375T change (LM+ST) restored sensitivity to BNM-III-170 (**Fig. 6.1.6D**). The S375H change completely abrogated CD4mc interaction regardless of the LM mutations (**Fig. 6.1.6D**), as seen with CRF01\_AE strains (**Fig. 6.1.2, 6.1.3, and 6.1.4**; see also **Fig. 6.1.S1**). Revisiting the data shown in **Fig. 6.1.5F**, the three strains that were the least sensitive to BNM-III-170 were found to have inner domain residues shared with the CRF01\_AE consensus sequence (**Fig. 6.1.1C and 6.1.6A**): CH505 (V108, N474, and K476), CH470 (N474 and K476), and CH198 (N474 and K476). Some of the LM mutations were also naturally found in two clade B strains used in this study: JRFL (Q105) and CH77 (V108, N474, and K476) (**Fig. 6.1.6A**). Interestingly, replacement of these residues with residues that coevolved with S375 was found to increase CD4mc sensitivity for both strains, regardless of the nature of the residue at position 375 (**Fig. 6.1.6E and F**). Altogether, our data show that the nature of the residue at position 375 and the coevolving gp120 inner domain layers modulate the susceptibility of HIV-1 major clades to CD4mc.

### **Structural analysis of the interaction of CD4mc and HIV-1 gp120 with Phe43 cavity and inner domain layer changes.**

Functional analysis clearly indicates that the LM+HT Env variant is the most effective at binding CD4mc. To better understand the structural basis for the role of the LM, HS, and HT mutations in reshaping the Phe43 cavity and in CD4mc binding, we solved the crystal structures of the CRF01\_AE 93TH057 gp120 extended core (gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub> [49]) containing the LM+HS changes in complex with two CD4mc compounds: MCG-IV-210 and BNM-III-170. The LM+HS gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub>-MCG-IV-210 complex was solved to 2.5-Å resolution (see **Table 6.1.S1** in the supplemental material; see also **Fig. 6.1.S3**), enabling an assessment of the impact of the HS mutation by comparison to the LM+HT gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub>-MCG-IV210 complex structure solved by us previously to 2.65-Å resolution (PDB identifier [ID] 6P9N) ([37](#)). We also solved the structure of the LM+HS gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub>-BNM-III-170 complex to 2.65-Å resolution (**Table 6.1.S1**), allowing a comparison with the structure of the HS gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub> (the CRF01\_AE 93TH057 gp120 core<sub>e</sub> with a single-point H375S mutation) in complex with DMJ-II-121, a compound closely related to BNM-III-170 (PDB ID 4I54). DMJ-II-121 lacks a (methylamino)-

methyl addition to position 5 of the indane ring but is identical to BNM-III-170 in all other respects. We first sought to understand the exclusive role of residue 375, in the context of the CRF01\_AE LM gp120 variant, in influencing the interaction with CD4mc. We analyzed the complex structures of LM+HS and LM+HT gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub>s bound to the same MCG-IV-210 compound, which displayed the highest sensitivity to position 375 changes among all CD4mc tested (**Fig. 6.1.7**). As shown in **Fig. 6.1.8A**, MCG-IV-210 bound within the hydrophobic Phe43 cavity of both gp120 mutants, anchoring deeply into the cleft. The buried surface area (BSA) measurements of the complexes were 678 Å<sup>2</sup> (243 Å<sup>2</sup> from gp120 and 435 Å<sup>2</sup> from the compound) and 699 Å<sup>2</sup> (252 Å<sup>2</sup> from gp120 and 447 Å<sup>2</sup> from the compound) for the complexes of LM+HS gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub>-MCG-IV-210 and LM+HT gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub>-MCG-IV-210, respectively, indicating that more surface was buried by the LM+HT variant (**Fig. 6.1.8C**). In addition, while the orientations of MCG-IV-210 in the binding pocket of both complexes were identical, the shapes of the pockets differed. The H375T mutation added one methyl group compared with the H375S mutation, and this addition led to the closing of the Phe43 cavity from the top. The T375  $\gamma$ -carbon methyl group made a number of additional contacts with the halogenated aromatic ring of the compound, but this did not lead to an increase in the BSA at position 375 due to rearrangement of the Phe43 cavity. In fact, the presence of Thr375 led to a notable decrease in the BSA within the cavity, where residues Thr257 on the left side, Phe382 and Asn425 on the right side, and Trp427 on the bottom made more contact with the compound in the LM+HS mutant. However, residues surrounding the cavity vestibule, including Asp368, Glu370, and Ile371 at the top of the Phe43 cavity, Asn424 on the right side, and Gly472, Gly473, and Met475 at the bottom (as orientated in **Fig. 6.1.8B**), made more contact with MCG-IV-210 and increased the BSA in the LM+HT mutant. The increases in BSA for residues lining the Phe43 cavity may further augment the LM mutant stabilization of layer 3, which may provide an explanation for the added potency for MCG-IV-210 in the LM+HT mutant.

Next, to better understand the exclusive role of the LM residues in reshaping the Phe43 cavity for effective interaction with CD4mc, we analyzed the complex structures of BNM-III-170 and DMJ-II-121 co-crystalized with gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub>s that differed only in the LM residues (**Fig. 6.1.8D**). Structural analyses indicated that the LM+HS gp120 core<sub>e</sub>-BNM-III-170 complex buried more BSA and was stabilized by more contacts than the HS gp120 core<sub>e</sub>-DMJ-II-121 complex

(**Fig. 6.1.8E and F**). Although some contacts observed in LM+HS gp120 core<sub>e</sub>-BNM-III-170 complex were not present in HS gp120 core<sub>e</sub>-DMJ-II-121 complex due to its smaller size [i.e., the hydrogen bond extending from the carbonyl of Gly472 to the (methylamino)methyl addition to BNM-III-170 and contacts extending from the (methylamino)methyl to Ala281, Thr283, and Thr455; **Fig. 6.1.8F**], there was a significant increase in the BSA of the remaining contact residues; these contacted equivalent compound atoms in the BNM-III-170 LM+HS gp120 core<sub>e</sub> complex (313 Å<sup>2</sup> for BNM-III-170 [296 Å<sup>2</sup> when the methylamino-methyl contribution is subtracted] versus 271 Å<sup>2</sup> for DMJ-II-121). These included contacts mediated by the highly conserved Glu370 and Ile424 residues as well as Ser375 itself, all capping the CD4mc in the Phe43 cavity from the top. There were also increased contacts to the 470-to-475 loop region (e.g., residues Gly472, Asp474, and Met475). Interestingly, two of the LM residues, Asp474 and Met475, contributed directly to CD4mc binding and increased BSA. The LM Ile475-to-Met mutation decreased the size of the Phe43 cavity and increased the hydrophobic surface available for CD4mc binding. On the other hand, Asp474 stabilized the interlayer interactions by forming a hydrogen bond to Arg476. This tightening of one side of the Phe43 binding pocket likely also led to the increase in BSA for residues on the opposite side of the pocket, including Ser375 and Gly429 (**Fig. 6.1.8F**). Thus, although only two of the LM residues interacted directly with BNM-III-170, their combination had an additive effect on binding and resulted in an overall increase in the complex BSA and compound affinity.

Furthermore, we conducted *in silico* analysis to predict the interaction energies present upon docking of CD4mc BNM-III-170 with our different gp120 variants. All-atom, explicit-solvent molecular dynamics (MD) simulations of BNM-III-170-bound complexes were conducted for the WT, H375S, H375T, LM, LM+HS, and LM+HT versions of gp120 core<sub>e</sub>. Average protein-ligand interaction energies were computed from these simulations under the generalized Born surface area (GBSA) implicit solvent model. The average relative interaction energies ranked from least to most favorable in the order WT < H375S < LM < H375T < LM+HS < LM+HT, as shown in **Fig. 6.1.8G**. This ordering is consistent with the ordering in half-maximal inhibitory concentration (IC<sub>50</sub>) values indicated in **Fig. 6.1.3D**, suggesting that enthalpic interactions are of high importance in determining how these residues change and how they reshape the CD4-binding site (CD4BS) to affect the activity of CD4mc.

### **Phe43 cavity and inner domain substitutions shape the highly conserved CD4 binding site.**

The CD4-binding site (CD4BS) region of Env represents a highly complex quaternary arrangement of five different loops that meet to form this highly conserved structure. The following three loops converge to form the Phe43 cavity: the CD4-binding loop (residues 365 to 371), which makes critical contacts with CD4 residues F43 and R59 ([1](#)); the  $\beta$ 20- $\beta$ 21 loop (residues 424 to 432), which acts as a conformational regulatory switch between the inner domain and the outer domain of gp120 ([62](#)); and the outer domain exit loop (residues 470 to 475), linking the outer domain to inner domain layer 3. Two other loops in the periphery of the Phe43 cavity were shown to be implicated in CD4 binding: loop D (residues 275 to 283) and the V5 loop (residues 457 to 468) ([1](#)). On the basis of structural analysis presented in **Fig. 6.1.8**, the LM+HS/T changes appear to have increased the interaction of CD4mc with the Phe43 cavity by restructuring the CD4BS, most particularly the outer domain exit loop. To better understand the molecular basis of this phenomenon, we solved crystal structures of gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub>s containing the LM mutations in combination with H375S (LM+HS) or H375T (LM+HT) in their unliganded state (**Table 6.1.S1**). Unliganded structures of the LM+HS and LM+HT cores were solved at 2.2-Å and 2.5-Å resolution, respectively. The structures of LM+HS and LM+HT gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub>s compared to the wildtype gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub> (PDB code 3TGT [[49](#)]), which carries a His at position 375, are shown in **Fig. 6.1.9**.

There is close similarity between the structures of the LM+HS and LM+HT core<sub>e</sub>s. Indeed, alignments showed that they have a root mean square deviation (RMSD) of 0.43 Å for their main chain atoms. Alignments to the wild-type gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub>, resulted in RMSD values of 0.45 Å and 0.54 Å for the LM+HS and LM+HT mutants, respectively, indicating a larger dissimilarity between the LM+HT and wild-type core<sub>e</sub> structures. Interestingly, a closer look into interactions formed by mutated residues in the LM+HS and LM+HT core<sub>e</sub>s (**Fig. 6.1.9A**, magnified view) reveals a new network of interactions mediated by Asp474 and Arg476 that stabilize the inner domain mobile layer 2 and 3 interface in the CD4-bound conformation ([51](#), [63](#), [64](#)). Asp474 in combination with Glu102 in layer 2 formed a network of hydrogen bonds with Arg476 in both LM mutants that bridged the two layers. This network of hydrogen bonds is absent from other clade gp120 core<sub>e</sub> structures, with the exception of the clade B YU2 gp120 (PDB ID 3TGQ). In wild-

type CRF01\_AE gp120, Lys476 formed a hydrogen bond with Glu102, but without the added stability made possible by the Arg476 guanidinium group, leaving Asn474 out of the interface. Other LM mutant changes that potentially add to the interface stability are the Gln105-to-His mutation, which changes the character of the Trp479 amide hydrogen bond, and the Val108-to-Ile mutation, which increases the hydrophobic surface available for interaction with Pro253. CRF01\_AE 93TH057 gp120 has a histidine at residue 375, in contrast to the more common Ser or Thr, which only partially fills the Phe43 cavity, leaving the space required for CD4mc compound binding. The H375S/T mutation most likely induces a loss in stability of the CD4 binding pocket in the absence of CD4 or CD4mc that in LM variants is partially compensated for by the Ile475-to-Met mutation. Both Ile475 in the wild-type gp120 and Met475 in the LM mutant pack against Trp479, which links the Phe43 pocket to the layer 3-layer 2 interface through the Trp479 amide bond to Gln105 (wild type) or His105 (LM). The bulkier side chain of Met475 provides more hydrophobic surface to the network, stabilizing and reshaping the Phe43 cavity.

The added stability of the LM mutations can be visualized by the crystallographic temperature or B-factors which describe the spread of electron density attributed to each atom (**Fig. 6.1.9B**). Outside the V1/V2 and V4 loop regions, which differ greatly between structures, one region formed by residues 470 to 475 stands out in the normalized B-factor plot ([65](#)). The levels of main chain atom B-factors corresponding to the residues in this region are much lower for the LM+HS and LM+HT mutants than for wild-type Env, implying that there is a greater degree of structural stability in this region in the LM mutants. It was shown previously that residues of the outer domain exit loop contribute to CD4mc binding, as also seen in the unliganded LM+HS and LM+HT core<sub>s</sub> ([37](#), [45](#), [48](#)). This raises the possibility that the observed rigidification constitutes an element that reshapes the Phe43 cavity, leading to preferential binding of CD4 or CD4mc; conversely, binding of CD4 or CD4mc might stabilize layer 3, which can lead to downstream conformational changes in the gp120 inner domain. Interestingly, another region of the CD4BS was found to be significantly rigidified in the presence of the LM+HS/T mutations: the V5 loop region (residues 457 to 468). This region has previously been described as being implicated in CD4 attachment but also as being recognized by most known broadly neutralizing Abs targeting the CD4BS (e.g., VRC01). Notably, alterations in the V5 region have been associated with resistance to members of the VRC01 class of Abs ([66–71](#)) and b12 ([72](#)), consistent

with a potential effect of V5 loop rigidification on gp120 recognition by CD4BS Abs. To validate our model, we evaluated the ability of a panel of CD4BS Abs to bind to CRF01\_AE Envs harboring one of several different residues at position 375 (H375, S375, and T375) in combination with the LM mutations or not. Consistent with the CD4BS restructuring shown in **Fig. 6.1.9A**, the presence of the LM mutations was shown to increase the binding of all CD4BS Abs, except b12, regardless of the nature of the residue at position 375 in both CRF01\_AE strains tested (**Fig. 6.1.9C**). CD4BS recognition of Env-expressing cells correlated with the neutralization profile of these mutants (**Fig. 6.1.9D**).

Finally, since changes in the gp120 inner domain layers in combination with changes at position 375 have a global effect on the CD4BS, we tested the sensitivity of our panel of CRF01\_AE Env mutants to another class of Env antagonists targeting the CD4BS: cyclic peptide triazoles (cPTs) ([73](#), [74](#)). Again, the introduction of the LM mutations in combination with a small residue at position 375 (LM+HS and LM+HT) in a CRF01\_AE Env was found to dramatically increase the sensitivity to neutralization by all cPTs tested (AAR029N2 and AAR029N3) (**Fig. 6.1.S4**). However, the presence of a bulky residue at position 375 (H375) was found to abrogate this effect and conferred total resistance to the members of this class of compound (**Fig. 6.1.S4B to D**). In summary, supported by structural data and functional assays using a wide variety of CD4BS probes, our data show that residue 375 and its inner domain coevolving residues act together to shape the highly conserved CD4BS.

## 6.2.6 DISCUSSION

Previous studies have indicated that the gp120 inner domain plays a role in modulating the transition of Env from its unbound to its CD4-bound conformation ([13–15](#), [75](#), [76](#)). Here, we add a detailed structural understanding of this mechanism by identifying six gp120 inner domain residues able to shape the Phe43 cavity and the CD4 binding site. Collectively named layer mutants (LM), these residues determine the efficiency with which HIV-1 Envs negotiate transitions from the pre-triggered state 1 conformation to CD4-bound conformations (states 2 and 3). Structures of trimeric Env stabilized in the native state 1 conformation might be required for observation of the conformational rearrangement of the gp120 inner domain layers upon CD4 or CD4mc binding. The efficiency with which a given HIV-1 variant undergoes these conformational changes influences virus susceptibility to a number of antiviral agents directed against the CD4-binding region of gp120, including CD4mc, CD4 miniproteins, cPTs, and different CD4BS antibodies. Our report documents the significant impact of the LM residues on the susceptibility of HIV-1 strain variants to this major class of virus entry inhibitors and opens the door to the rational design of agents with improved antiviral potency and breadth.

The LM residues also modulate the susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. Small-molecule CD4mc have been shown to enhance dramatically the ADCC-mediating potency of the antibodies present at high titers in the sera of almost all HIV-1-infected individuals ([33](#)). CD4mc are under investigation as a means to use ADCC to effect a functional “cure” of HIV-1 infection, as an adjunct to highly active antiretroviral therapy. Knowledge of the identity of the LM residues in the HIV-1 strains present in infected individuals could assist in the identification of subjects most likely to benefit from available CD4mc. The structural information on LM residues provided by our study can assist the design of CD4mc tailored to be effective against particular HIV-1 strains.

Many epitopes of Env have changed at a population level during the AIDS pandemic ([77](#)). Notably, a significant decline in sensitivity of clade B circulating strains to CD4BS antibodies was observed. We examined the historical changes in residue occupancy at position 375 in diverse clades and distinct geographic regions. Among CRF01\_AE strains, H375 remained highly conserved during the pandemic (**Fig. 6.1.10A**). In contrast, striking changes occurred in other



group M major clades, most importantly in clade B, where a gradual but constant loss of S375 occurred, with S375 progressively replaced by T375 (**Fig. 6.1.10A**). The different patterns observed in the HIV-1 major clades and CRF01\_AE, which follow similar patterns in distinct geographic regions (**Fig. 6.1.10B**), likely reflect differences in the constraints applied to the Phe43 cavity in the unique context of their Envs. They suggest an ongoing evolution of the CD4BS, which might need to be taken into account in developing CD4mc or immunogens designed to elicit CD4BS Abs. With respect to the issue of why T375 seems especially able to induce susceptibility to CD4mc irrespective of the LM, one clue from the structures presented here offers a possible explanation: space in the Phe43 cavity near S375 is strongly occupied by a density that may represent water or a crystallization solute, and this density is largely lacking for T375; these observations suggest higher susceptibility for T375 because it has fewer solvent molecules to eject in permitting CD4mc binding.

Taking the data together, here we show that residue 375 and its inner domain coevolving residues act together to shape the highly conserved CD4BS. This new structural understanding will assist ongoing efforts to improve CD4mc and other agents directed against the CD4BS and to design immunogens aimed at eliciting CD4BS antibodies.

## **6.2.7 MATERIALS AND METHODS**

### **Ethics statement**

Written informed consent was obtained from all study participants (the Montreal Primary HIV Infection Cohort [78, 79] and the Canadian Cohort of HIV Infected Slow Progressors [80–82]), and research adhered to the ethical guidelines of CRCHUM and was reviewed and approved by the CRCHUM institutional review board (ethics committee, approval number CE 16.164 –CA). Research adhered to the standards indicated by the Declaration of Helsinki. All participants were adults and provided informed written consent prior to enrollment in accordance with Institutional Review Board approval.

### **Sequence analysis**

The Logo plots (83) for HIV were made using the Analyze Align tool at the HIV database and are based on the WebLogo 3 program ([https://www.hiv.lanl.gov/content/sequence/ANALYZEALIGN/analyze\\_align.html](https://www.hiv.lanl.gov/content/sequence/ANALYZEALIGN/analyze_align.html)) and the HIV-1 database global curated and filtered 2017 alignment published circa June 2018, including 1 HIV-1 Env protein sequence per person from 5,471 individuals. The relative height of each letter within individual stack represents the frequency of the indicated amino acid at that position. The numbering of all the Env amino acid sequences is based on the prototypic HXBc2 strain of HIV-1, where 1 is the initial methionine (84).

### **Analysis of historical changes in amino acid sequence**

HIV-1 Env sequences were obtained from the Los Alamos National Lab (LANL) database (<https://www.hiv.lanl.gov>). Non-functional Envs and sequences with nucleotide ambiguities were removed. Nucleotide sequences were aligned using a hidden Markov model with HMMER3 software (85), and phylogenetic relationships between sequences were inferred by the maximum-likelihood method using PhyML3 (86). A single env gene from each patient and a single sequence from known transmission pairs were used. In addition, a minimal distance of 0.03 nucleotide substitutions per site was applied as a cutoff for selection. Sequences were archived and residue frequencies at all Env positions in each population were determined using software developed in-house, as previously described (77).

### **Cell lines and isolation of primary cells**

HEK293T human embryonic kidney cells and Cf2Th canine thymocytes (obtained from ATCC) were grown as previously described (14). Cf2Th cells stably expressing human CD4 and CCR5 (Cf2Th-CD4/CCR5) (87) were grown in medium supplemented with 0.4 mg/ml of G418 (Invitrogen) and 0.15 mg/ml of hygromycin B (Roche Diagnostics). Primary human peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) and CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were isolated, activated, and cultured as previously described (23, 33). Briefly, PBMCs were obtained by leukapheresis and CD4<sup>+</sup> T lymphocytes were purified from resting PBMCs by negative selection using immunomagnetic beads per the instructions of the manufacturer (StemCell Technologies, Vancouver, BC, Canada) and were activated with phytohemagglutinin-L (10 µg/ml) for 48 h and then maintained in RPMI 1640 complete medium supplemented with recombinant interleukin-2 (rIL-2) (100 U/ml).

## Plasmids and proviral constructs

The plasmids expressing the CRF01\_AE Envs HIV-1<sub>92TH023</sub> and HIV-1<sub>CM244</sub> were previously reported ([41](#), [88](#)). Plasmid pSVIIIenv expressing the full-length HIV-1<sub>YU2</sub> Env and Tat-expressing plasmid pLTR-Tat were previously described ([14](#)). The sequence of full-length clade B HIV-1<sub>JRFL</sub> ([21](#)) and clade A HIV-1<sub>BG505</sub> Envs ([89](#)) were codon optimized (GenScript) and cloned into expression plasmid pcDNA3.1(-) (Invitrogen). An asparagine residue was introduced at position 332 (N332) to allow recognition of 2G12 antibody. Vesicular stomatitis virus G (VSV-G)-encoding plasmid pSVCMV-IN-VSV-G was previously described ([90](#)). For crystallographic studies, the plasmid used to express gp120 extended core (core<sub>e</sub>) from CRF01\_AE strain 93TH057 (gp120 lacking the N and C termini and variable loops 1, 2, and 3) was previously described ([49](#)). The transmitted/founder (TF) CRF01\_AE 40061 full viral genome was retrieved by single-genome amplification and cloned to generate full-length infectious molecular clone (IMC) as previously reported ([91](#)). TF and chronic IMCs of patients CH40, CH58, CH77, CH167, CH185, CH198, CH236, CH470, CH505, CH850, RHGA, and STCO were inferred, constructed, and biologically characterized as previously described ([92–98](#)). The JRFL IMC was also previously described ([99](#)). Mutations were introduced individually or in combination into the different Env expressors or IMCs using the QuikChange II XL site-directed mutagenesis protocol (Stratagene). The presence of the desired mutations was determined by automated DNA sequencing. The numbering of all the Env amino acid sequence is based on the prototypic HXBc2 strain of HIV-1, where 1 is the initial methionine ([84](#)).

## Viral production and infections

To achieve similar levels of infection in primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells among the different IMCs tested, VSV-G-pseudotyped HIV-1 was produced and titrated as previously described ([24](#)). Viruses were then used to infect activated primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from healthy HIV-1- negative donors by spin infection at 800 × g for 1 h in 96-well plates at 25°C. For the viral neutralization assay, Cf2Th-CD4/CCR5 cells were infected with single-round luciferase-expressing HIV-1 ([14](#)). Briefly, 293T cells were transfected by the calcium phosphate method with the proviral vector pNL4.3(Env-)Luc and a plasmid expressing wild-type or mutant HIV-1 Env at a ratio of 2:1. Two days after transfection, the cell supernatants were harvested. The reverse transcriptase activities of

all virus preparations were measured as described previously ([100](#)). Each virus preparation was frozen and stored in aliquots at -80°C until use.

### **Antibodies and sera**

The following Abs were used to assess cell surface Env staining: A32, 17b, 19b, F240, PG16, N6, NIH45-46<sup>G54W</sup>, VRC01, VRC03, HJ16, VRC-CH31, F105 (NIH AIDS Reagent Program), PGT151, PGT128 (IAVI), 3BNC117 (kindly provided by M. Nussenzweig, The Rockefeller University, New York, NY), b6, b12 (kindly provided by D. Burton, The Scripps Research Institute, La Jolla, CA), VRC07-523-LS, VRC13, VRC16 (kindly provided by J. Mascola, Vaccine Research Center, Bethesda, MD), GE2.JG8 (kindly provided by G. Karlsson Hedestam, Karolinska Institutet, Sweden), and N49P7 (kindly provided by M. Sajadi, University of Maryland, Baltimore, MD). The anti-CD4 OKT4 monoclonal antibody (recognizing the D3 domain of CD4) (eBioscience) was used to measure the binding of sCD4 to cell surface Env. Goat anti-mouse and anti-human antibodies pre-coupled to Alexa Fluor 647 (Invitrogen) were used as secondary antibodies in flow cytometry experiments. Sera from HIV-infected individuals were collected, heat inactivated, and conserved at -80°C until use. A random number generator (GraphPad; QuickCalcs, San Diego, CA, USA) was used to randomly select a number of sera for each experiment.

### **CD4 mimetics and other small molecules**

Soluble CD4 (sCD4) and the miniprotein M48U1 were produced and purified as previously described ([14](#), [101](#)). The CD4 mimetic compounds (CD4mc) NBD-556, JRC-II-191, DMJ-II-121, JP-III-48, BNM-III-170, BNM-IV-147, BNM-IV-197, MCG-IV-210, SMK-II-48, AEG-I-249, AEG-I-259, and MCG-III-051 were developed and synthesized as described previously ([37](#), [45–47](#), [52](#), [61](#), [102](#)) or as described in the “Chemical synthesis” section below. The CD4mc were analyzed, dissolved in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) at a stock concentration of 10 mM, aliquoted, and stored at -80°C. Cyclic peptide triazoles (cPTs) AAR029N2 and AAR029N3 were synthesized, purified (95% homogeneity by reverse-phase HPLC), and structurally validated as previously described ([73](#), [74](#)). The cPTs were analyzed, dissolved in DMSO at a stock concentration of 10 mM, aliquoted, and stored at -80°C. Each compound was then diluted to the

indicated concentrations in phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) for cell surface staining, in RPMI 1640 complete medium for ADCC assays, or in complete Dulbecco's modified Eagle's medium (DMEM) for viral neutralization assays.

### **Viral neutralization assay**

Cf2Th-CD4/CCR5 target cells were seeded at a density of  $5 \times 10^3$  cells/well in 96-well luminometer-compatible tissue culture plates (Perkin Elmer) 24 h before infection. Luciferase-expressing recombinant viruses (10,000 reverse transcriptase units) in a final volume of 100  $\mu$ l were incubated with the indicated amounts of different proteins, compounds, or antibodies for 1 h at 37°C and were then added to the target cells followed by incubation for 48 h at 37°C; the medium was then removed from each well, and the cells were lysed by the addition of 30  $\mu$ l of passive lysis buffer (Promega) followed by three freeze-thaw cycles. An LB 941 TriStar luminometer (Berthold Technologies) was used to measure the luciferase activity of each well after the addition of 100  $\mu$ l of luciferin buffer (15 mM MgSO<sub>4</sub>, 15 mM KPO<sub>4</sub> [pH 7.8], 1 mM ATP, and 1 mM dithiothreitol) and 50  $\mu$ l of 1 mM D-luciferin potassium salt (Prolume). The neutralization half-maximal inhibitory concentration (IC<sub>50</sub>) represents the amount of protein, compound, or antibody needed to inhibit 50% of the infection of Cf2Th-CD4/CCR5 cells by recombinant luciferase-expressing HIV-1 bearing the indicated Env.

### **Flow cytometry analysis of cell surface staining**

Cell surface staining of infected cells was performed as previously described ([24](#), [33](#)). Binding of cell surface HIV-1 Env by sera (1:1,000 dilution) or anti-Env mAbs (5  $\mu$ g/ml) was performed at 48 h post-infection in the presence of CD4mc or of an equal amount of the vehicle (DMSO). Infected cells were stained intracellularly for HIV-1 p24, using a Cytotfix/ Cytoperm fixation/permeabilization kit (BD Biosciences, Mississauga, ON, Canada) and fluorescent anti-p24 mAb (phycoerythrin [PE]-conjugated anti-p24, clone KC57; Beckman Coulter/Immuntotech). The percentage of infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup>) was determined by gating the living cell population on the basis of viability dye staining (Aquavidin; Thermo Fisher Scientific). Samples were acquired on an LSR II cytometer (BD Biosciences), and data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star, Ashland, OR, USA).

Cell surface staining of Env-expressing 293T cells was performed as previously described (103). Briefly,  $2 \times 10^6$  cells were transfected with 7  $\mu\text{g}$  of Env expressor and 1  $\mu\text{g}$  of a green fluorescent protein (GFP) expressor (pIRES2-GFP) with the calcium-phosphate method. When the pSVIII Env expressor was used, it was co-transfected with 0.25  $\mu\text{g}$  of a Tat-expressing plasmid. At 48 h post-transfection, 293T cells were stained with anti-Env antibodies (5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{ml}$ ). Alternatively, to evaluate sCD4 binding to the different cell surface Envs, transfected 293T cells were incubated with sCD4 (5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{ml}$ ), followed by staining performed with the monoclonal anti-CD4 OKT4 antibody (0.5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{ml}$ ). In experiments using transfected cells, all mean fluorescent intensities (MFI) were normalized to the MFI of 2G12 for each Env mutant.

### **FACS-based ADCC assay**

Measurement of ADCC using the fluorescence-activated cell sorter (FACS)-based assay was performed at 48 h post-infection as previously described. Briefly, infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were stained with Aquavid viability dye and cell proliferation dye (eFluor670; eBioscience) and used as target cells. Autologous PBMC effector cells, stained with another cellular marker (cell proliferation dye eFluor450; eBioscience), were added at an effector/target ratio of 10:1 in 96-well V-bottom plates (Corning, Corning, NY). A 1:1,000 final dilution of sera was added to appropriate wells, and the cells were incubated for 15 min at room temperature. The plates were subsequently centrifuged for 1 min at  $300 \times g$  and incubated at 37°C and 5% CO<sub>2</sub> for 5 h before being fixed in a 2% PBS– formaldehyde solution. Samples were acquired on an LSR II cytometer (BD Biosciences), and data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star). The percentage of ADCC resulting from gating performed on infected lived target cells was calculated with the following formula: (percentage of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in targets plus effectors)  $\times$  (percentage of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in targets plus effectors plus sera) / (percentage of p24<sup>+</sup> cells in targets).

### **Protein expression and purification**

Plasmids encoding the layer mutant gp120 extended core (core<sub>e</sub>) proteins, HIV-1<sub>93TH057</sub> gp120 core<sub>e</sub> LM+HS and LM+HT, were transfected into GnT1<sup>-</sup> cells using Xtremegene transfection reagent (Sigma-Aldrich) per the manufacturer's instructions. Following 7 days of culture growth at 37°C and 8% CO<sub>2</sub>, cells were pelleted by centrifugation and cell supernatant was filtered. Expressed gp120 was purified by passage over a 17b affinity column made by cross-

linking mAb 17b to protein A (Pierce protein A IgG plus orientation kit; Thermo Fisher). gp120 was eluted with 0.1 M glycine (pH 3.0) into tubes containing 1/10 the final volume of 1 M Tris-HCl (pH 8.5) to raise the pH. The protein was then deglycosylated with 10 units/ $\mu$ g of Endo H<sub>f</sub> (New England Biolabs) overnight at 37°C in a mixture of deglycosylation buffer, 50 mM sodium acetate (pH 6.0), and 350 mM sodium chloride. Endo H<sub>f</sub> was removed by passage over an amylose resin column, and the protein was further purified by gel filtration chromatography on a Superdex 200 16/60 column (GE Healthcare, Piscataway, NJ) equilibrated with 5 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.2) and 150 mM sodium chloride. The protein was concentrated to approximately 5 mg/ml for use in crystallization trials.

### **X-ray crystallography**

Deglycosylated HIV-1<sub>93TH057</sub> gp120 core<sub>e</sub> LM+HS or LM+HT (5 mg/ml) was crystallized by the hanging drop method in a mixture containing 5 to 10% polyethylene glycol (PEG) 1500, 6% PEG 400 (LM+HT), and 0.1 M HEPES (pH 7.5) or 5 to 10% PEG 3350, 6% PEG 400, and 0.1 M HEPES (pH 7.5) (LM+HS). CD4 mimetics were solubilized with DMSO at a concentration of 10 mM and diluted with crystallization buffer to 100 nM prior to use in crystal soaks. When CD4mc was added to the crystal, an equal volume of the 100 nM mimetic in crystallization buffer was added to the hanging drop and the crystals were allowed to soak for 4 h before being frozen. Crystals were flash frozen in liquid nitrogen after a brief soak in crystallization buffer containing 18% MPD (2-methyl-2,4-pentanediol) for cryoprotection and a 50 nM concentration of CD4mc when CD4mc was added.

### **Data collection, structure solution, and refinement**

Data were collected on National Synchrotron Light Source II (NSLS II) highly automated macromolecular crystallography (AMX) beamline 17-ID-1 on an Eiger 9M detector system or on Stanford Synchrotron Radiation Light Source (SSRL) beamline 12-2 on a Dectris Pilatus 6M detector system. Data were integrated and processed with MOSFLM and SCALA from the CCP4 suite ([104](#)) or HKL2000 ([105](#)). Crystals were orthorhombic, belonging to space group P2<sub>1</sub>2<sub>1</sub>2<sub>1</sub>, with cell dimensions of a = 64.0 to 66.8 Å, b = 65.6 to 67.5 Å, and c = 86.2 to 87.8 Å, with diffraction to 2.2 to 2.65 Å. Structures were solved by molecular replacement with the program PHASER from the CCP4 suite using PDB ID 3TGT as a starting model. Model building was done

using the program COOT (106). Refinement was done using the program REFMAC from the CCP4 suite or PHENIX (65).

### **Structure validation and analysis**

The quality of the final refined models was monitored using the program MolProbity (107). Structural alignments were performed using the Dali server and the program LSQKAB from the CCP4 suite (104). The PISA webserver was used to determine contact surfaces and residues. All illustrations were prepared with the PyMol molecular graphic suite (DeLano Scientific, San Carlos, CA, USA). The Ramachandran plot was obtained by the use of the validation program “MolProbity” and shows that 92.8 to 97.0% of the total amino acids are in the most favored region, 3 to 6.6% in the generously allowed region, and 0 to 0.6% in the disallowed region, depending on the structure, with better values corresponding to the higher-resolution structures. Complete data collection and refinement statistics can be found in **Table S1**.

### ***In silico* analysis**

Starting with the H375S clade A/E HIV-1 core gp120 monomer in PDB entry 4H8W (108), we generated via residue mutation the WT, H375S, H375T, LM, LM+HS, and LM+HT variants and docked BNM-III-170 to each via alignment to the 5F4P PDB entry (45). For each variant, five independent fully TIP3P-solvated MD systems were generated and run for 500 ns each using NAMD 2.13 with the CHARMM36 force field, with configurations saved every 0.1 ns. For each system, molecular mechanics-generalized Born surface area (MMGBSA) interaction energy data were computed by reprocessing trajectories through NAMD and computing protein-only, ligand-only, and protein-plus-ligand potential energies under the generalized Born implicit solvent (GBIS) model. The GBIS parameters included a solvent dielectric constant of 74.69, a total molar ion concentration of 0.3, a screening cutoff of 14 Å, and surface tension of 0.0072 kcal/mol/Å<sup>2</sup>.

### **Statistical analysis**

Statistics were analyzed using GraphPad Prism version 6.0.1 (GraphPad, San Diego, CA, USA). Every data set was tested for statistical normality, and this information was used to apply the appropriate (parametric or nonparametric) statistical test. P values of < 0.05 were considered



significant, and significance values are indicated as follows: \*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ .

## **Chemical synthesis**

For details about chemical synthesis, see Text S1 in the supplemental material.

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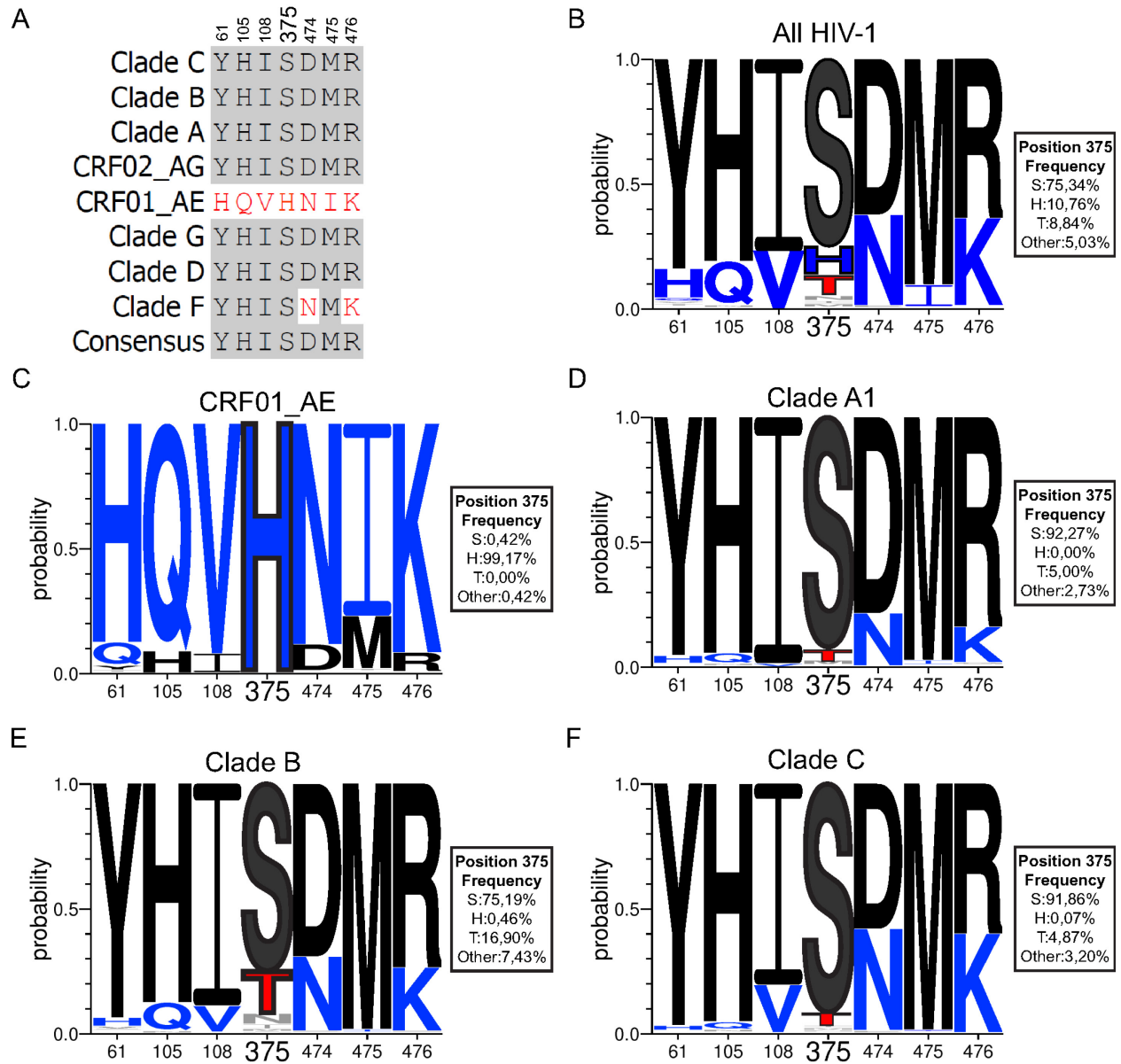
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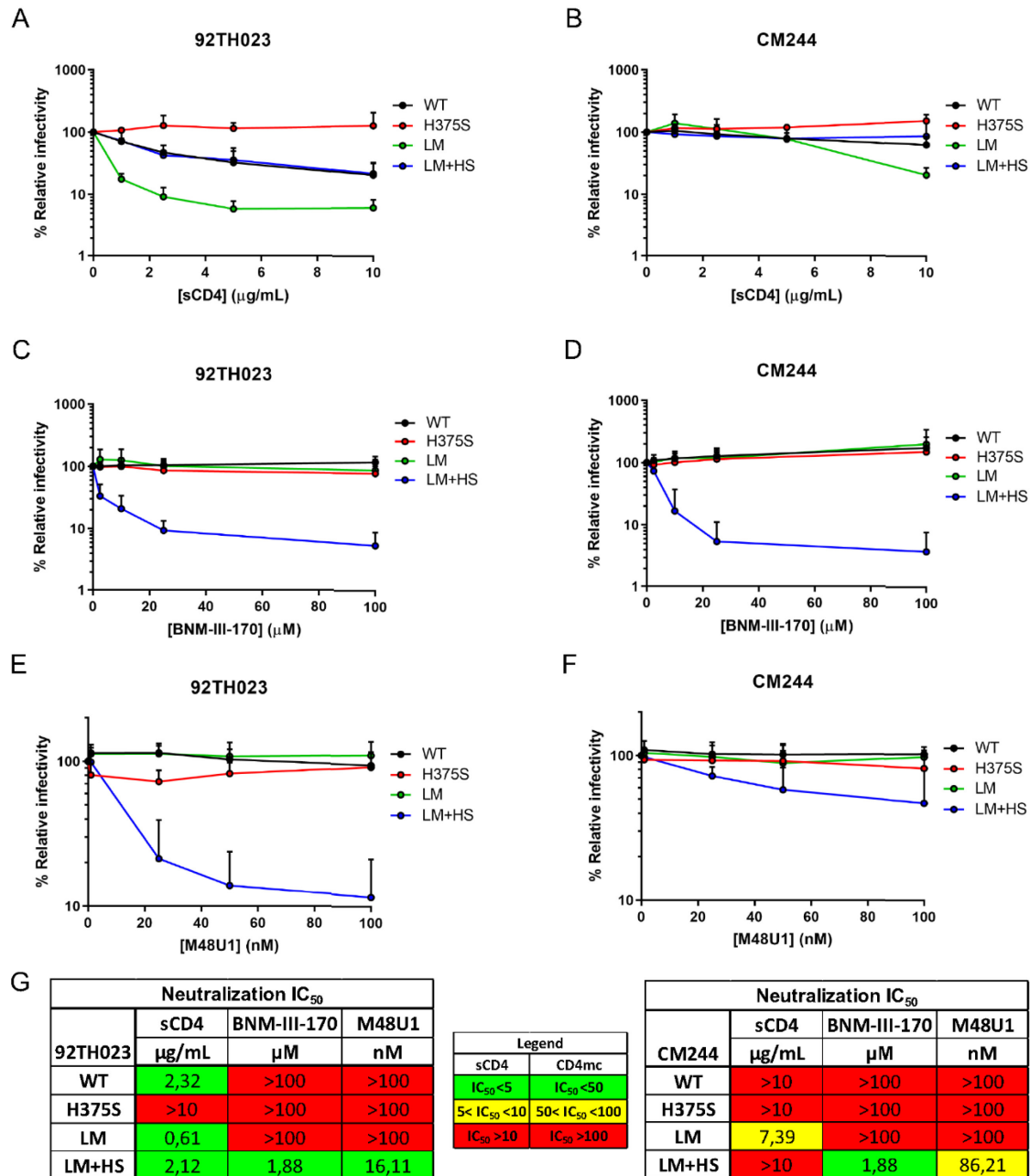
## 6.2.10 FIGURES





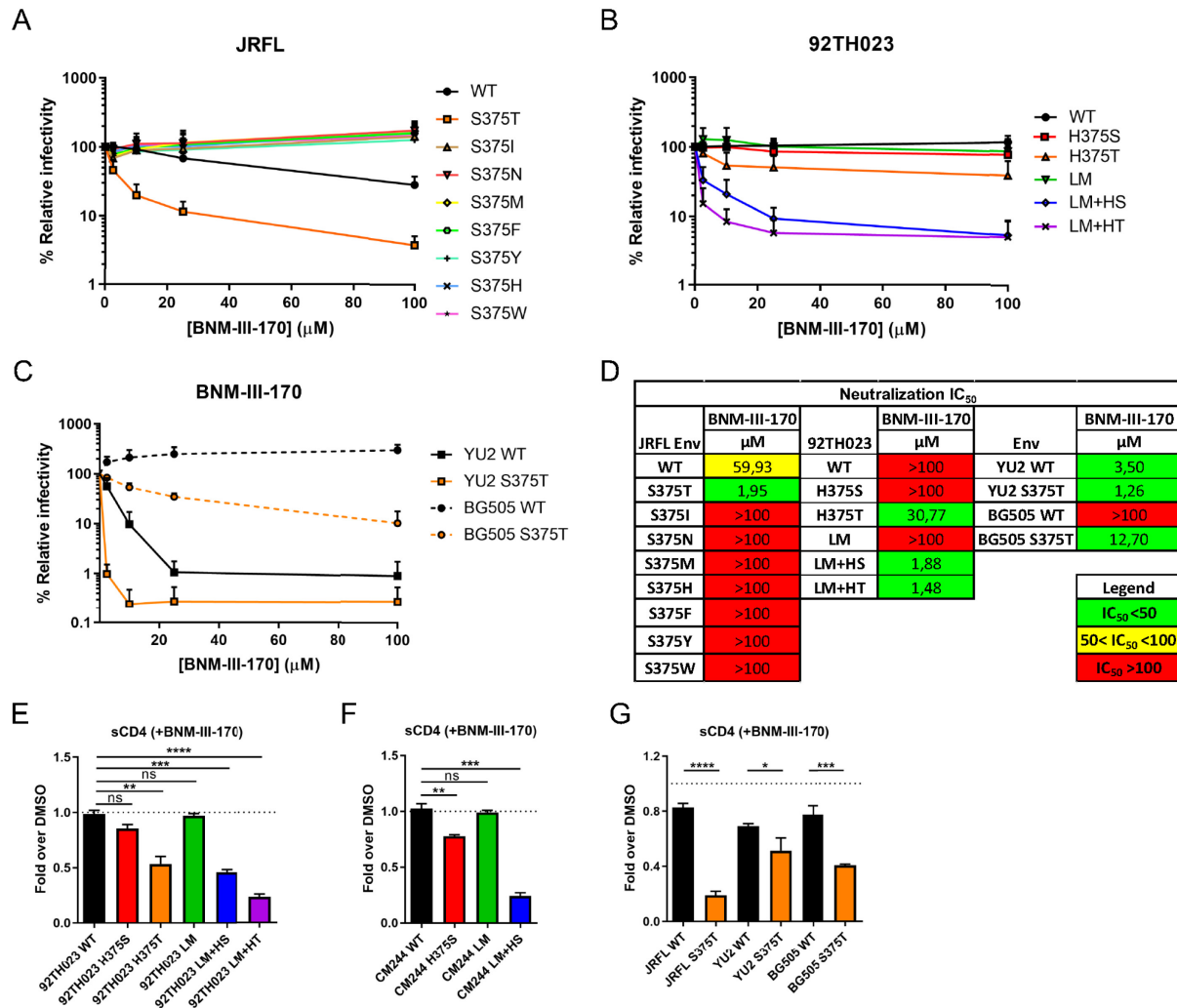
**Figure 6.1.1 - Sequence alignment of gp120 Phe43 cavity and inner domain layer residues of different HIV-1 isolates.**

(A) Sequence alignment of selected gp120 residues located in the Phe43 cavity (375) or the inner domain layers (61, 105, 108, 474, 475, and 476) based on the Env consensus sequence of each of the HIV-1 group M major subtypes (clades A, B, C, D, F, G, CRF01\_AE, and CRF02\_AG). The 2017 Los Alamos database-curated Env alignment was used as the basis for this figure, which contains 5,471 amino acid HIV-1 group M sequences (including 481 sequences of CRF01\_AE, 220 of subtype A1, 1,937 of subtype B, and 1,377 of subtype C). Residue numbering is based on that of the HXBc2 strain of HIV-1. Identical residues are shaded in dark gray, and nonidentical residues are highlighted in red. (B to F) Logo depictions of the frequency of each amino acid from the Phe43 cavity at positions 61, 105, 108, 375, 474, 475, and 476 in all HIV-1 isolates (B) or in isolates from CRF01\_AE (C), clade A1 (D), clade B (E), and clade C (F). The height of the letter indicates its frequency within the clade. S375 and its coevolving residues are shown in black, H375 and its coevolving residues are shown in blue, and T375 is shown in red. The box beside each logo indicates the frequency of all the amino acids at position 375.



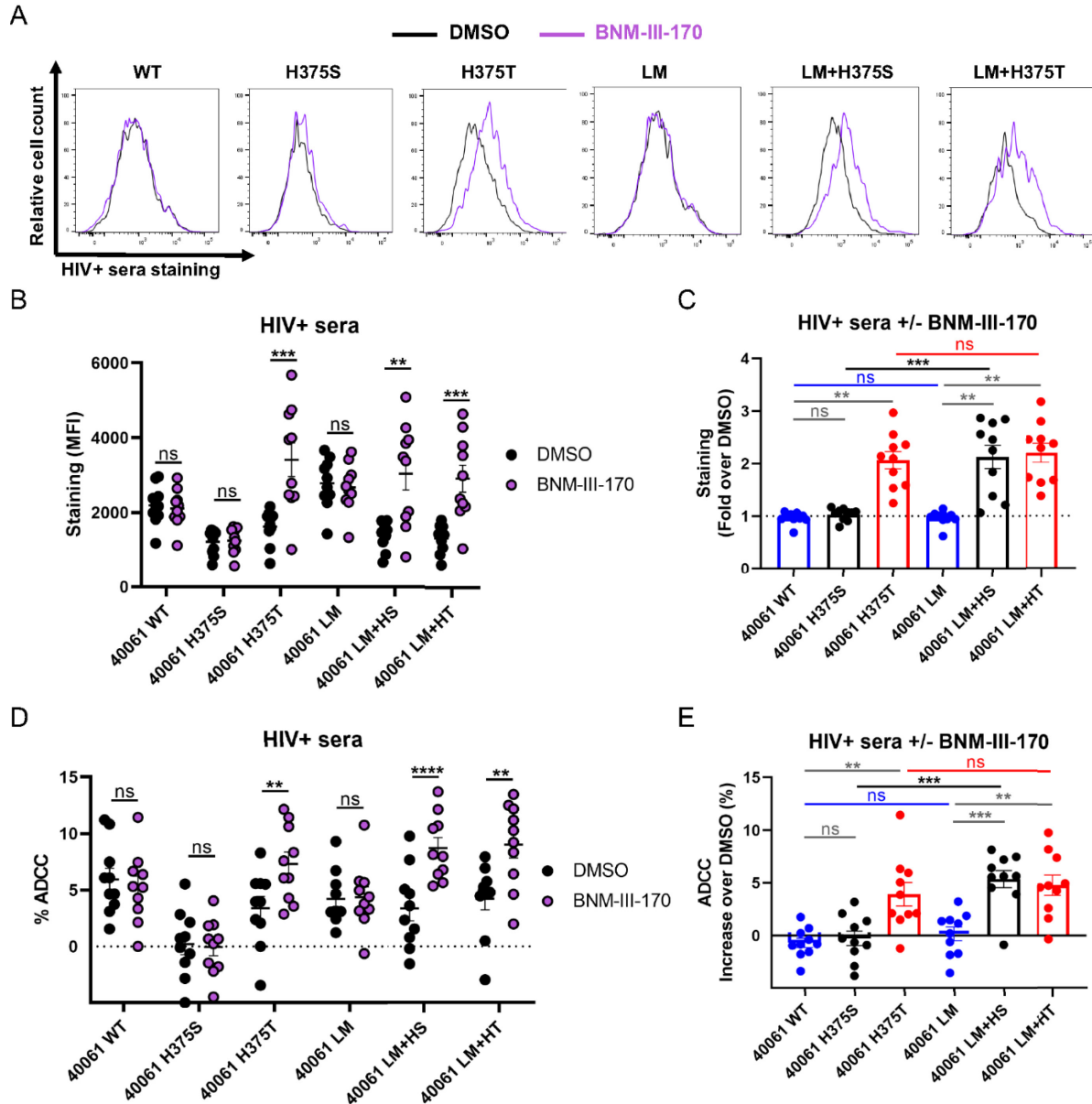
**Figure 6.1.2 - Effect of gp120 layer mutations on neutralization by CD4 and CD4mc.**

Recombinant HIV-1 strains expressing luciferase and bearing wild-type or mutant CRF01\_AE Envs (92TH023 and CM244 isolates) were normalized by reverse transcriptase activity. Normalized amounts of viruses were incubated with serial dilutions of sCD4 (**A and B**), BNM-III-170 (**C and D**), or M48U1 (**E and F**) at 37°C for 1 h prior to infection of Cf2Th-CD4/CCR5 cells. Infectivity at each dilution of sCD4 or CD4mc tested is shown as the percentage of infection without sCD4 or CD4mc for each particular mutant. Quadruplicate samples were analyzed in each experiment. Data shown are the means of results obtained in at least 3 independent experiments. The error bars represent the standard deviations. Neutralization half-maximal inhibitory concentration (IC<sub>50</sub>) values are summarized in panel **G**.



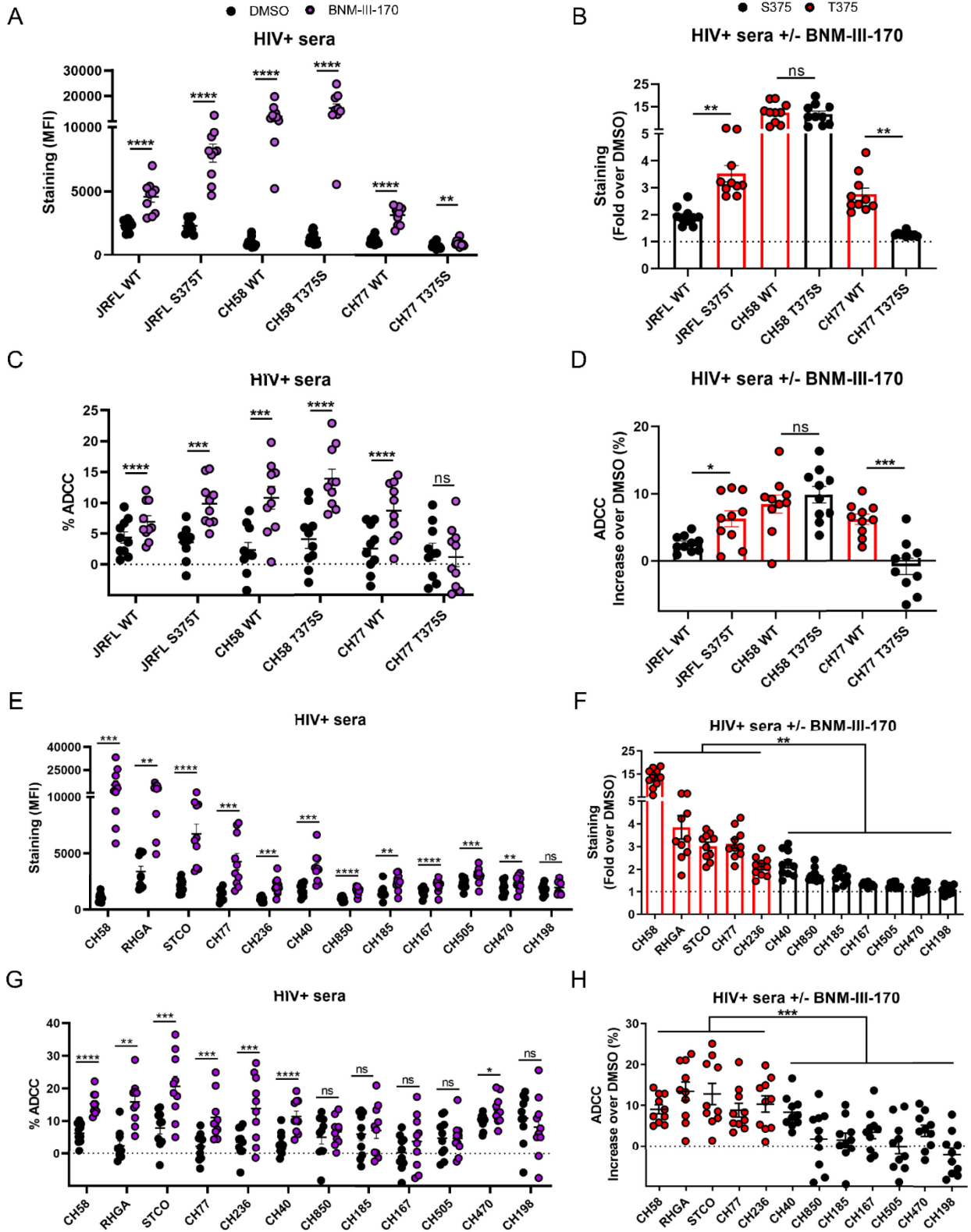
**Figure 6.1.3 - Effect of Env residue 375 on CD4mc neutralization sensitivity.**

(A to D) Recombinant HIV-1 strains expressing luciferase and bearing wild-type or mutant Envs (JRFL, 92TH023, YU2, and BG505 isolates) were normalized by reverse transcriptase activity. Normalized amounts of viruses were incubated with serial dilutions of BNM-III-170 (A to C) at 37°C for 1 h prior to infection of Cf2Th-CD4/CCR5 cells. Infectivity at each dilution of CD4mc tested is shown as the percentage of infection without CD4mc for each particular mutant. Quadruplicate samples were analyzed in each experiment. Data shown are the means of results obtained in at least 3 independent experiments. The error bars represent the standard deviations. Neutralization half-maximal inhibitory concentrations (IC<sub>50</sub>) are summarized in panel D. (E to G) Cell surface staining of 293T cells transfected with different Env expressors (92TH023, CM244, JRFL, YU2, and BG505 isolates [WT or their mutated counterparts]). Binding of sCD4 in the presence of BNM-III-170 (50 µM) or in its absence (DMSO) was detected with the anti-CD4 OKT4 mAb. Shown are the mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained in the presence of BNM-III-170 normalized to the MFI in the absence of BNM-III-170 (DMSO) from the transfected (GFP<sup>+</sup>) population for staining obtained in at least 3 independent experiments. All MFI data were normalized to 2G12 MFI for each Env mutant. Error bars indicate means +/- standard errors of the means (SEM). Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).



**Figure 6.1.4 - Phe43 cavity and inner domain changes enhance susceptibility of the CRF01\_AE HIV-1 strain to ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera in the presence of CD4mc.**

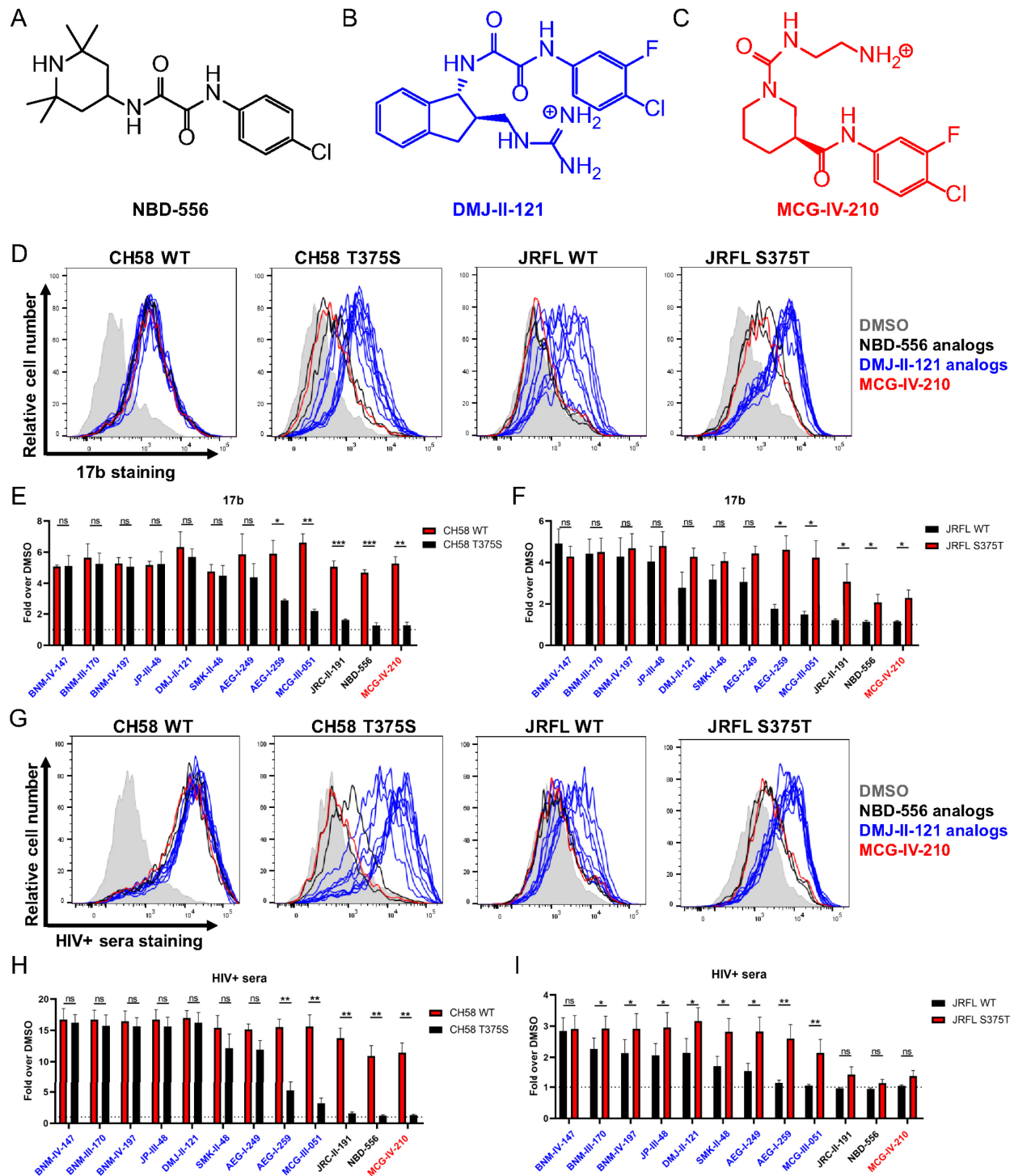
(A to C) Cell surface staining of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with a CRF01\_AE transmitted-founder (TF) strain (40061) and variants with 10 different HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. (A) Histograms depicting representative HIV<sup>+</sup> serum staining. (B and C) The graphs shown represent the compiled mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained with 10 HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (B) and the fold increase in MFI in the presence of CD4mc calculated for the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) population (C). (D and E) Infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were also used as target cells, and autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in a FACS-based ADCC assay. The graphs shown represent (D) the ADCC values and (E) the increase (in percentage points) of ADCC levels obtained in the presence of CD4mc with 10 HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. These results were obtained in at least 2 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means +/- SEM. Statistical significance was tested using a paired t test or a Wilcoxon rank test based on statistical normality (\*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).



**Figure 6.1.5 - Primary viruses harboring a T375 residue are highly susceptible to ADCC responses mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera in the presence of CD4mc.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were infected with clade B primary HIV-1 and their variants (**A to D**) or with a panel of TF and chronic viruses from clades B and C (**E to H**). At 48 h post-infection, cell surface staining was performed with 10 different HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. The graphs shown represent (**A and E**) the compiled mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained with 10 HIV<sup>+</sup> sera and (**B and F**) the fold increase in MFI in the presence of CD4mc calculated on the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) population. Infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were also used as target cells, and autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in a FACS-based ADCC assay. The graphs shown represent (**C and G**) the ADCC values and (**D and H**) the increases (in percentage points) in the levels of ADCC obtained in the presence of CD4mc with 10 HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. These results were obtained in at least 2 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means +/- SEM. Statistical significance was tested using a paired t test or a Wilcoxon signed-rank test (**A to E and G**) or an unpaired t test or Mann-Whitney U test (**F and H**), based on statistical normality (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001; ns, nonsignificant).

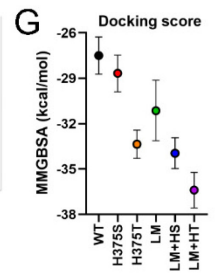
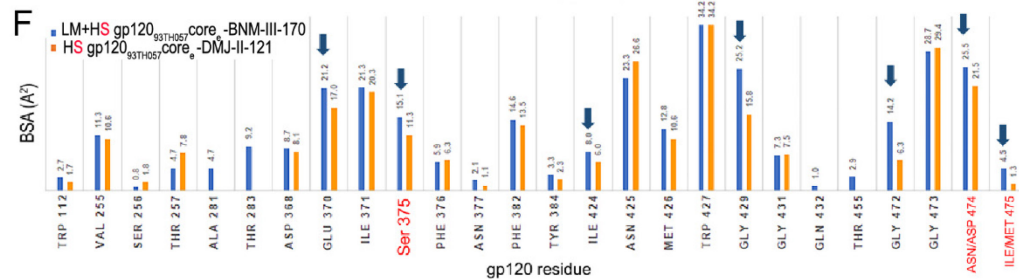
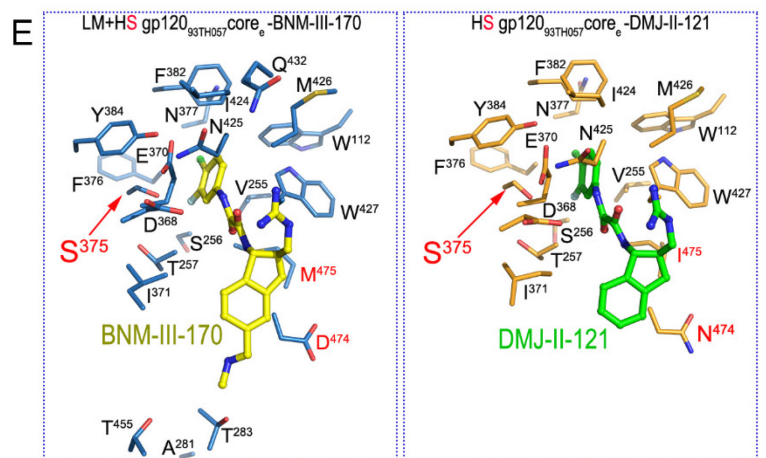
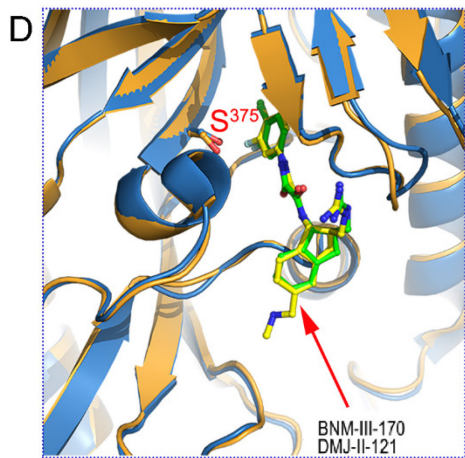
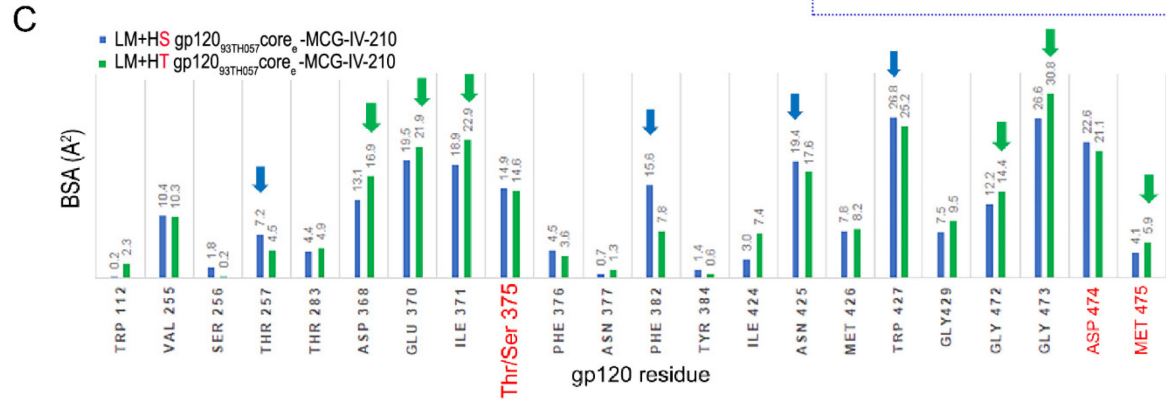
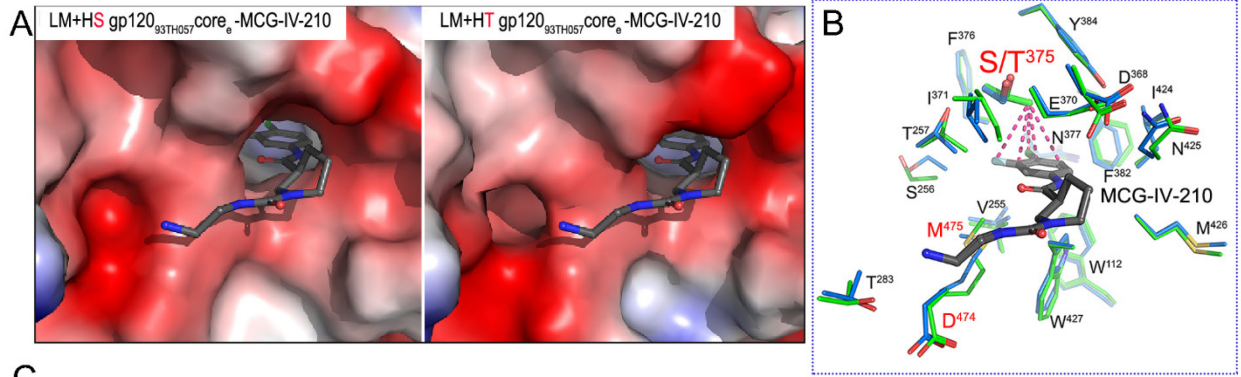






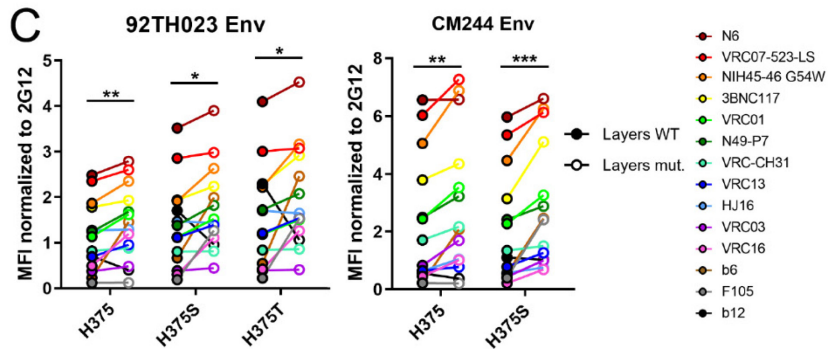
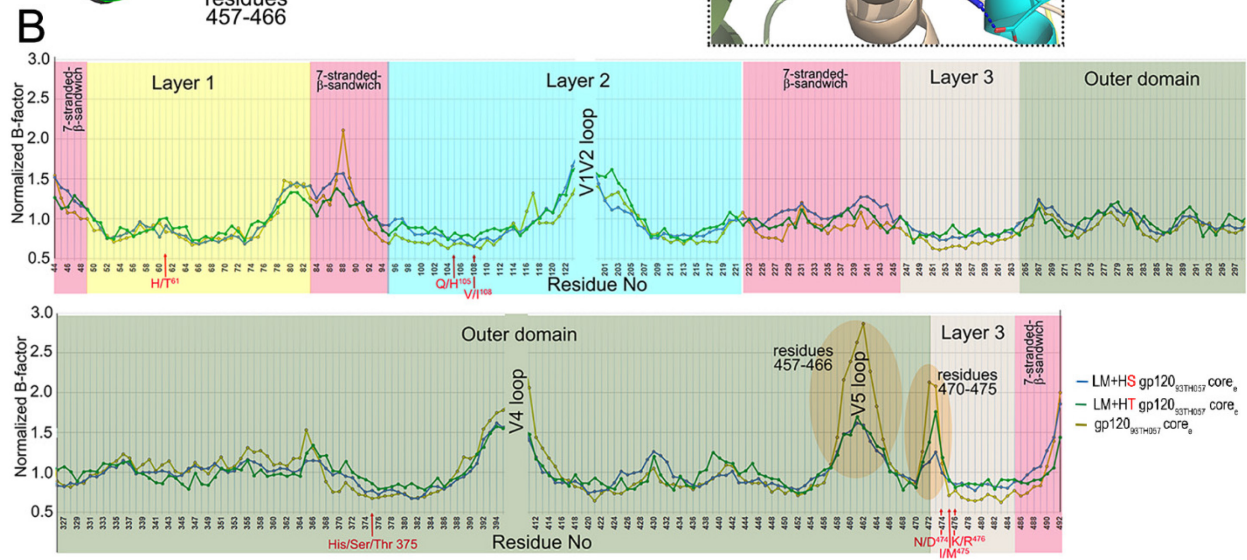
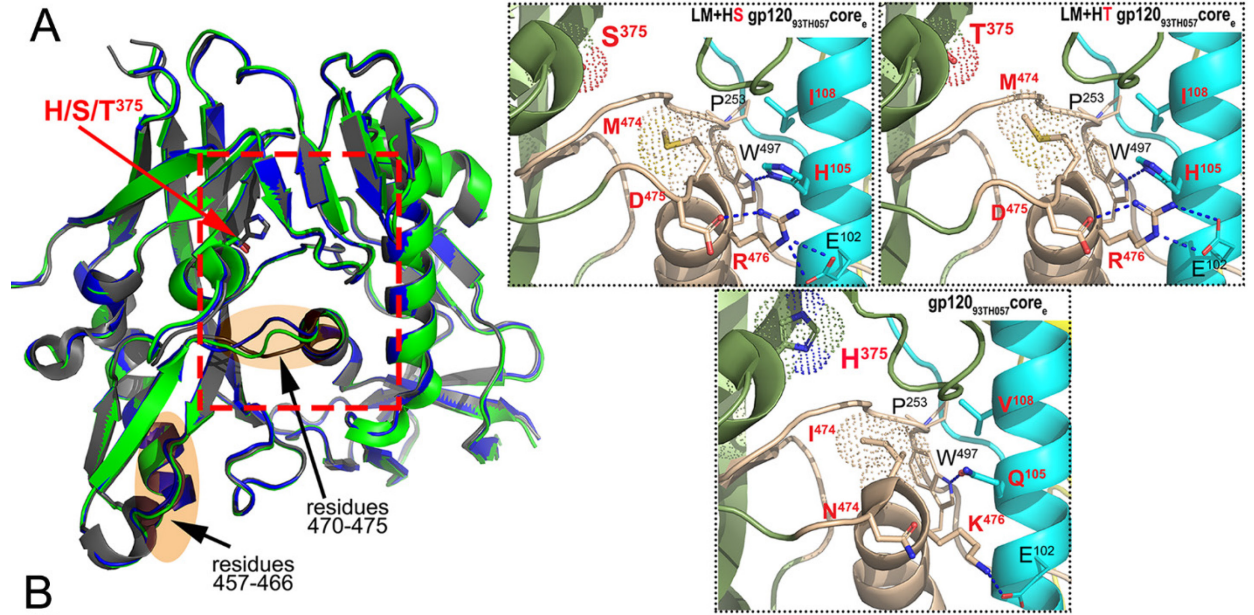
**Figure 6.1.7 - Residue 375 modulates Env sensitivity to different families of CD4mc.**

(A to C) Chemical structures of representative members of the different families of CD4mc tested. (D to I) Cell surface staining of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with CH58 or JRFL viruses and their variants with anti-Env 17b mAb (D to F) or HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (G to I) was performed. Shown in panels D and G are histograms depicting representative 17b and HIV<sup>+</sup> serum staining results. The graphs shown represent the fold increase in mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) in the presence of CD4mc calculated on the infected (p24<sup>+</sup>) population obtained with 17b (E and F) or with 5 different HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (H and I). These results were obtained in at least 3 independent experiments. Error bars indicate means +/- SEM. Statistical significance was tested using a paired t test or a Wilcoxon signed-rank test based on statistical normality (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001; ns, nonsignificant).



**Figure 6.1.8 - Structural effects of Phe43 cavity and inner domain changes on CD4mc docking into the Phe43 cavity.**

(A) Magnified views of the CD4 binding pocket of LM+HS and LM+HT gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core with MCG-IV-210 bound. Complexes are superimposed based on the gp120 core, and electrostatic surfaces are displayed over the gp120 molecule, with blue for electropositive and red for electronegative. The MCG-IV-210 compound is shown as balls and sticks. The LM+HT gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core–MCG-IV-210 complex shown is from PDB ID 6P9N. (B) Details of MCG-IV-210 interactions within the binding pocket. The side chains of gp120 residues that interact with MCG-IV-210 are shown as sticks; LM+HS is depicted in green and LM+HT in blue. MCG-IV-210 is shown with balls and sticks. MCG-IV-210 atoms that interact with the T375 -carbon methyl group are shown with dashes connecting to the methyl group. (C) Analysis of the MCG-IV-210 interface for binding to LM+HS and LM+HT gp120. The relative contributions of gp120 residues to compound binding are shown as buried surface area (BSA) data as calculated by PISA. BSA data represent the solvent-accessible surface area of the corresponding residue that is buried upon interface formation. (D) Structural comparison of LM+HS gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub>–BNM-III-170 and HS gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub>–DMJ-II-121 (PDB ID 4I54) complex structures. Complexes are superimposed based on the gp120 core. CD4mc compounds and Ser375 are shown as sticks. (E) Details of binding of BNM-III-170 (left panel) and DMJ-II-121 (right panel) to LM+HS gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub> and HS gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub>, respectively. Residues forming the binding site for the CD4mc compound are shown as sticks (with Gly residues omitted) with LM residues labeled in red. (F) Analysis of the gp120 core<sub>e</sub>s-CD4mc binding interfaces. The relative contributions of gp120 residues to BNM-III-170 and DMJ-II-121 binding are shown by the buried surface area (BSA) as calculated by PISA. BSA represents the solvent-accessible surface area of the corresponding residue that is buried upon interface formation. (G) Docking score based on MMGBSA interaction energies, showing five replica simulations each along with averages, for six BNM-III-170-bound gp120 models.



**D**

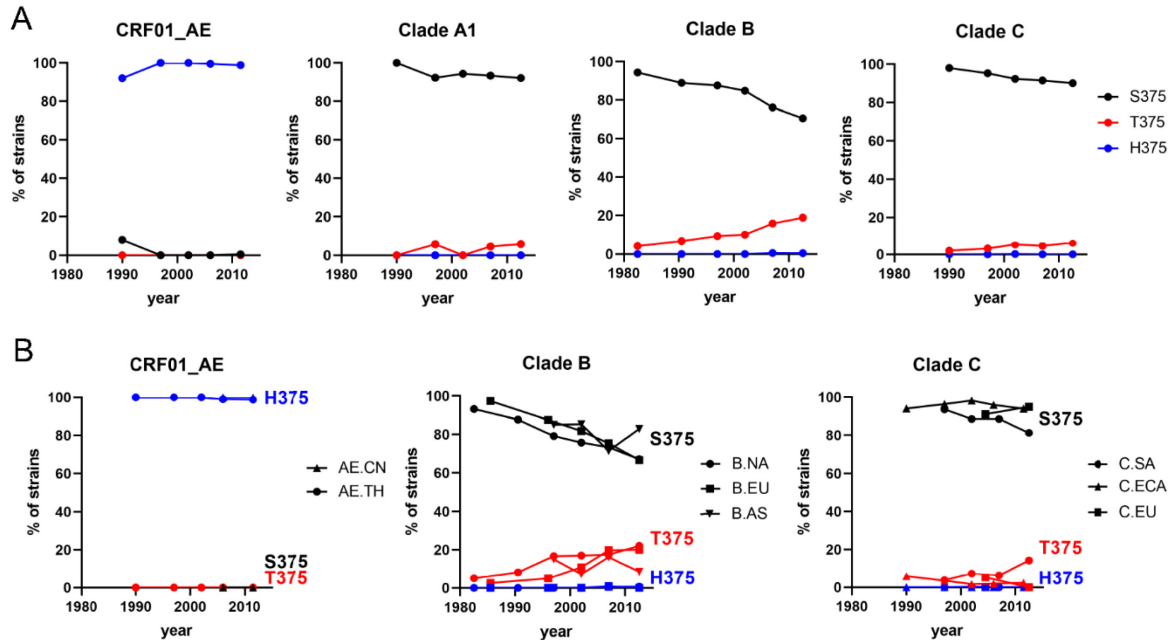
92TH023	Neutralization IC <sub>50</sub> (μg/mL)			
	VRC01	VRC13	VRC16	b12
WT	4,08	3,83	>10	>10
LM	2,10	3,60	3,44	>10
H375S	>10	3,59	>10	3,74
LM+HS	3,55	3,44	9,97	9,98

Legend

IC <sub>50</sub> < 5	5 < IC <sub>50</sub> < 10	IC <sub>50</sub> > 10
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**Figure 6.1.9 - Effect of gp120 layer mutations on the highly conserved CD4 binding site.**

(A) Structures of LM+HS and LM+HT gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> unliganded core<sub>e</sub>s are superimposed onto wild-type gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub> (PDB code: 3TGT). Residue 375 is shown as sticks, and the gp120 regions proximal to the CD4 binding site that shows the lowest B-factors in the LM core mutants compared to the unmutated core are highlighted in orange. The magnified views (right panel) show the network of interactions in each core mediated by LM+HS/T residues. The hydrogen bonds are shown as blue dashes. LM+HS/T residues are labeled in red. (B) Plot of the normalized B-factors for the main chain atoms of residues of core<sub>e</sub> structures. The rigidified region is highlighted in orange. (C) Cell surface staining of 293T cells transfected with CRF01\_AE Env expressors (92TH023 and CM244 isolates [WT or their mutated counterparts]) using a panel of CD4-binding site antibodies (CD4BS Abs). Shown are the mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) normalized to 2G12 MFI obtained in the transfected (GFP<sup>+</sup>) population for staining obtained in at least 3 independent experiments. All MFI data were normalized to 2G12 MFI for each Env mutant. Error bars indicate means +/- SEM. Statistical significance was tested using a paired t test or a Wilcoxon signed-rank test based on statistical normality (\*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01; \*\*\*, P < 0.001). (D) Recombinant HIV-1 strains expressing luciferase and bearing wild-type or mutant CRF01\_AE Envs (92TH023 and CM244 isolates) were normalized by reverse transcriptase activity. Normalized amounts of viruses were incubated with serial dilutions of VRC01, VRC16, VRC13, or b12 at 37°C for 1 h prior to infection of Cf2Th-CD4/CCR5 cells. Neutralization half-maximal inhibitory concentration (IC<sub>50</sub>) data are summarized.



**Figure 6.1.10 - Historical changes in amino acid sequence at position 375 in diverse clades and distinct geographic regions.**

Env sequences from samples collected worldwide between 1979 and 2015 were examined. Totals of 335, 1,942, 1,248, and 543 Envs were used, from clades A1, B, C, and CRF01\_AE, respectively. (A) Changes in frequencies of residues at position 375 in different clades. Values represent percentages of isolates from each 5-to-7-year period that contained the indicated residue. (B) Changes in frequencies of residues at position 375 in the indicated geographic regions. The residues shown in panels A and B account in most cases for more than 95% of all circulating strains. Sequences were analyzed phylogenetically to include a single Env from each patient (see Materials and Methods). For accuracy, only data from time periods with more than 25 patients are included for each clade and region. The following abbreviations are used: for clade B, NA, North America; EU, Europe; AS, Asia; for clade C, SA, Southern Africa (South Africa and Botswana); ECA, Eastern and Central Africa; IN/NP, India and Nepal; for CRF01\_AE, CN, China; TH, Thailand.

## 6.2.11 SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL

### Chemical synthesis

#### General Considerations

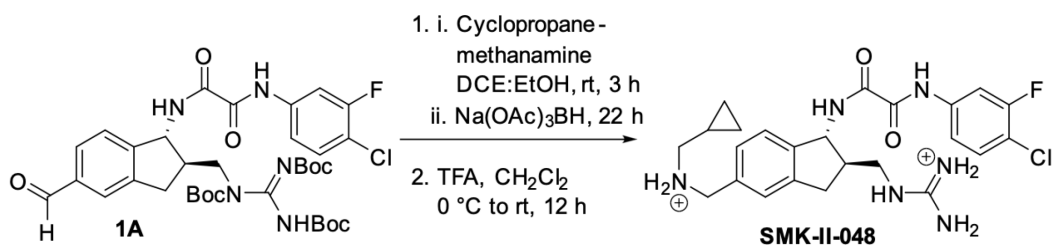
All reactions were conducted in oven-dried glassware under an inert atmosphere of nitrogen, unless otherwise stated. All solvents were reagent or high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) grade. Anhydrous  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , toluene, ether and THF were obtained from the Pure Solve™ PS-400 system under an argon atmosphere. All reagents were purchased from commercially available sources and used as received. Reactions were magnetically stirred under a nitrogen atmosphere, unless otherwise noted and reactions were monitored by either thin layer chromatography (TLC) with 250  $\mu\text{m}$  SiliaPlate™ pre-coated TLC plates or analytical ultraperformance liquid chromatography (UPLC). Yields refer to chromatographically or spectroscopically pure compounds. Optical rotations were measured on a JASCO P-2000 polarimeter. Proton ( $^1\text{H}$ ) and carbon ( $^{13}\text{C}$ ) NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker Avance III 500-MHz spectrometer. Chemical shifts ( $\delta$ ) are reported in parts per million (ppm) relative to chloroform ( $\delta$  7.26), dimethyl sulfoxide ( $\delta$  2.50), acetone ( $\delta$  2.05) or methanol ( $\delta$  3.31) for  $^1\text{H}$ -NMR, and chloroform ( $\delta$  77.0), dimethyl sulfoxide ( $\delta$  39.4), acetone ( $\delta$  29.8) or methanol ( $\delta$  49.0) for  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR. Infrared spectra were recorded using a JASCO 480-Plus FT-IR spectrometer, or a Perkin-Elmer Spectrum Two FT-IR spectrometer. Accurate mass measurements (AMM) were recorded at the University of Pennsylvania Mass Spectroscopy Service Center on either a Waters LCT Premier XE LC/MS or a Waters GC-TOF Premier system. Waters software calibrates and reports by use of neutral atomic masses. The mass of the electron is not included. Preparative scale HPLC was performed with a Gilson 333/334 preparative pump system equipped with a 5 mL injection loop, Sunfire C18 OBD column (10  $\mu\text{m}$  packing material, 30 x 150 mm column dimensions) equipped with a UV-Vis dual wavelength (210 and 254 nm) detector and 215 liquid handling module. Solvent systems were comprised of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and acetonitrile containing 0.1% trifluoroacetic acid. Lyophilization was performed in a Labconco FreeZone 12 Plus lyophilizer (0.035 mbar). The purity of new compounds was judged by NMR and LCMS (>95%).

#### Previously Reported Compounds

The synthesis and characterization of BNM-III-170, JP-III-048, BNM-IV-147, BNM-IV-197 (45), DMJ-II-121 (46), NBD-556 (101), JRC-II-191 (52) and MCG-IV-210 (37) have been previously reported.

### Synthesis of SMK-II-048

Synthesis of aldehyde **1A** has been reported.<sup>6</sup>



**SMK-II-048.** To a flask charged with aldehyde **1A** (30 mg, 0.041 mmol), cyclopropanemethylamine hydrochloride (44 mg, 0.41 mmol) at room temperature under nitrogen atmosphere was added dichloroethane (2 mL) and ethanol (2 mL). The reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 3 h before addition of sodium triacetoxyborohydride (6.0 mg, 0.103 mmol). The resulting reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 22 h, then cooled to 0 °C and quenched with aq. sat. NaHCO<sub>3</sub> and diluted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The biphasic solution was then adjusted to pH 10 with aq. 1M NaOH and stirred for 30 min. The layers were then separated and the resulting aqueous layer was extracted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The combined organic layers were washed with aq. sat. NaCl, dried over Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, and concentrated *in vacuo*. The residue was run through a plug of silica gel, eluting with 20:80 hexanes:EtOAc containing 1% triethylamine, then concentrated *in vacuo* and used in the next step without further purification. The residue was taken up in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> and cooled to 0 °C before addition of trifluoroacetic acid (0.075 mL, 1.0 mmol). The solution was stirred for 12 h at room temperature, then cooled to 0 °C before addition of trifluoroacetic acid (0.05 mL, 0.6 mmol). The solution was stirred at room temperature for 24 h, then concentrated *in vacuo* and taken up in H<sub>2</sub>O/CH<sub>3</sub>CN (80:20) and subjected to HPLC purification. Conditions: eluent H<sub>2</sub>O/CH<sub>3</sub>CN (90:10 to 20:80, linear gradient); flow rate: 15 mL/min; run time: 17 min. Product-containing fractions were combined and the resulting solution

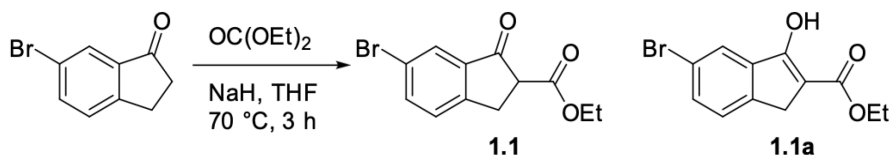


was deep-frozen (-78 °C bath) and lyophilized to afford product as a white powder (3.7 mg, 12% yield from **1A**).

**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, Acetone-*d*<sub>6</sub>) δ 10.33 (s, 1H), 9.72 (s, 2H), 8.87 – 8.75 (m, 2H), 7.93 (s, 1H), 7.83 (s, 2H), 7.70 (d, *J* = 22.1 Hz, 2H), 7.51 (t, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 1H), 7.46 (s, 1H), 7.36 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.23 (d, *J* = 7.7 Hz, 1H), 5.15 (d, *J* = 16.1 Hz, 1H), 4.26 (s, 2H), 3.57 (d, *J* = 29.7 Hz, 2H), 3.29 (dd, *J* = 15.9, 8.3 Hz, 1H), 2.82 – 2.74 (m, 2H), 0.62 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 0.39 (s, 2H).

1) J. Chen, J. Park, S. M. Kirk, H. C. Chen, X. Li, D. Lippincott, B. Melillo and A.B. Smith, III. *Org. Process Res. Dev.* **2019**.(doi: 10.1021/acs.oprd.9b00353)

### Synthesis of AEG-I-249 / AEG-I-259



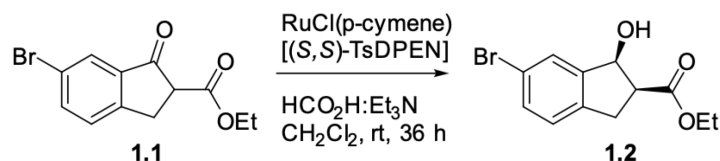
*α*-ketoester **1.1**. To a mixture of NaH (0.684 g, 17.1 mmol, 2.2 eq., 60% in mineral oil) in diethyl carbonate (5.65 mL, 46.6 mmol, 6 eq.) in a round bottom flask equipped with a reflux condenser under nitrogen gas at room temperature was added a solution of 6-bromoindanone (1.64 g, 7.77 mmol) in THF (13 mL). The reaction mixture was gradually warmed to 80 °C over 45 minutes. After another 2 hours the reaction was quenched with water. The reaction mixture was acidified to pH 2 with 1M aqueous HCl. This mixture was diluted with ethyl acetate and the layers were separated. The aqueous layer was washed with ethyl acetate (2 x 50 mL). The organic layers were combined, dried over sodium sulfate, decanted, and concentrated. Flash column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 100% hexanes to 25% ethyl acetate/hexanes) afforded a red solid (2.18 g, 99%).

**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) 1:0.5 mixture of tautomers. δ 10.31 (br. s, 0.5 H), 7.89 (s, 1 H), 7.77 (s, 1 H), 7.72 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 1 H), 7.52 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 0.5 H), 7.39 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 1 H), 7.32 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 0.5 H), 4.33 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 1 H), 4.25 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 2 H), 3.74 (dd, *J* = 4.0, 8.2 Hz, 1 H), 3.50 (dd, *J* = 4.0, 17.4 Hz, 2 H), 3.32 (dd, *J* = 8.3, 17.4 Hz, 1 H), 1.38 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 1.5 H), 1.31 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3 H).

**<sup>13</sup>C NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 198.2, 168.8, 152.3, 141.8, 139.1, 138.3, 137.2, 132.2, 128.2, 127.6, 126.3, 123.9, 122.1, 120.9, 104.0, 62.1, 60.5, 53.7, 32.5, 30.1, 14.6, 14.3

**IR**  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3379, 2922, 2845, 2300, 1564, 1399, 1108, 803

**AMM** (ESI) *m/z* 281.9892 [calcd for C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>11</sub>BrO<sub>3</sub> (M+H)<sup>+</sup> 281.98916]



*α*-hydroxyester **1.2**. To a solution of **1.1** (1.19 g, 4.22 mol) and RuCl(*p*-cymene)[(S,S)-Ts-DPEN] (0.0537 g, 0.0843 mmol, 0.02 eq.) in dichloromethane (4.0 mL, 1.0 M) under nitrogen at room temperature was added 5:2 formic acid:triethylamine (1.2 mL). After three days, the reaction mixture was diluted with dichloromethane and water. The layers were separated and the aqueous layer was washed three times with dichloromethane. The organic layers were combined, dried with sodium sulfate, decanted and concentrated. The crude product mixture was purified using flash column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 100% hexanes to 20% ethyl acetate/hexanes) to afford a yellow solid (1.16 g, 97%).

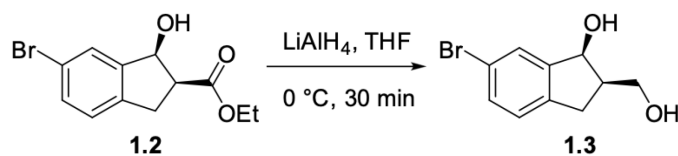
<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.55 (s, 1 H), 7.40 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1 H), 7.13 (d, *J* = 7.7 Hz, 1 H), 5.29 (d, *J* = 5.8 Hz, 1 H), 4.22 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 2 H), 3.35 (m, 2H), 3.04 (dd, *J* = 7.1, 14.9 Hz, 1 H), 1.31 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 3 H).

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 172.9, 145.1, 140.7, 132.1, 128.3, 126.5, 120.8, 75.6, 61.2, 49.6, 32.7, 14.4.

IR  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3409, 2917, 2843, 2362, 2350, 2335, 1365

AMM (ESI) *m/z* 284.0048 [calcd for C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>13</sub>BrO<sub>3</sub> (M+H)<sup>+</sup> 284.00481]

[ $\alpha$ ]<sub>D</sub><sup>23</sup> = - 1 ° (*c*, 2.2 CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>)



*Diol 1.3*. To a solution of **1.2** (0.501 g, 1.76 mmol) in tetrahydrofuran (8.8 mL, 0.2 M) at 0 °C was added lithium aluminum hydride (0.100 g, 2.63 mmol, 1.5 eq.) in 5 equal aliquots in 5 minute intervals. After one hour the reaction was quenched at 0 °C with water, then saturated aqueous sodium potassium tartrate. The biphasic mixture was allowed to stir at room temperature for 30 minutes. The mixture was diluted with ethyl acetate and the layers were separated. The aqueous layer was washed three times with ethyl acetate. The organic layers were combined, dried over sodium sulfate, decanted, and concentrated. Flash column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 20% ethyl acetate / hexanes to 10% methanol / ethyl acetate) to afford the desired product (0.309 g, 72%).

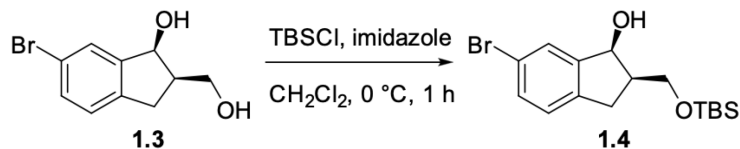
**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.55 (s, 1 H), 7.40 (dd, *J* = 1.9, 8.0 Hz, 1 H), 7.13 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1 H), 5.31 (d, *J* = 5.9 Hz, 1 H), 3.93 (m, 2 H), 2.88 (m, 2 H), 2.75 (m, 1 H).

**<sup>13</sup>C NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 146.4, 141.8, 131.9, 128.0, 126.7, 120.5, 77.2, 63.0, 45.4, 32.5

**IR**  $\nu_{\max}$  3386, 2910, 2844, 2361, 2340, 1655, 1548

**AMM** (ESI) *m/z* 241.9640 [calcd for C<sub>10</sub>H<sub>11</sub>BrO<sub>2</sub> (M+H)<sup>+</sup> 241.99424]

**[ $\alpha$ ]<sub>D</sub><sup>23</sup>** = + 41 ° (*c* 0.2, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>)



**Alcohol 1.4.** To a solution of **1.3** (1.08 g, 4.44 mmol) in dichloromethane (44 mL, 0.1 M) under nitrogen at 0 °C was added imidazole (0.605 g, 8.88 mmol, 1.2 eq.) then TBSCl (0.803 g, 5.33 mmol, 1.2 eq.). After 1.5 hours, the reaction was quenched with water and diluted with dichloromethane. The layers were separated. The aqueous layer was washed three times with dichloromethane. The organic layers were combined, dried over sodium sulfate, decanted, and concentrated. Flash column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 100% hexanes to 10% ethyl acetate / hexanes) to afford the desired product as an oil (1.45 g, 91%).

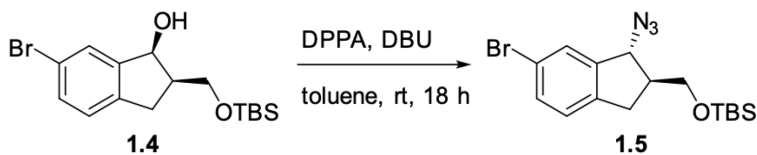
**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.55 (s, 1 H), 7.35 (d, 1 H, *J* = 8.0 Hz), 7.08 (d, 1 H, *J* = 8.0 Hz), 5.25 (d, 1 H, *J* = 6.5 Hz), 3.96 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 7.0, 10.4 Hz), 3.37 (br s, 1 H), 2.88 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 8.1, 16.0 Hz), 2.77 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 6.1, 16.0 Hz), 2.70 (m, 1 H), 0.87 (s, 9 H), 0.10 (s, 3 H), 0.06 (s, 3 H).

**<sup>13</sup>C NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 147.2, 141.3, 131.3, 128.1, 126.4, 120.4, 77.1, 63.7, 45.1, 33.0, 29.8, 25.9, 18.2, -5.4, -5.5

**IR**  $\nu_{\max}$  3414.35, 2955.38, 2921.63, 2850.27, 2362.37, 2335.37, 1470.46, 1254.47, 1168.65, 1089.58

**AMM** (ESI) *m/z* 355.0758 obs. C<sub>16</sub>H<sub>23</sub>BrO<sub>2</sub>Si [356.0807 calcd for C<sub>16</sub>H<sub>25</sub>BrO<sub>2</sub>Si (M+H)<sup>+</sup>]

**[ $\alpha$ ]<sub>D</sub><sup>23</sup>** = - 16 ° (*c* 0.07, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>)



**Azide 1.5.** To a solution of **1.4** (4.64 g, 13.0 mmol) in toluene under nitrogen at room temperature was added diphenylphosphoryl azide (5.6 mL, 26.0 mmol, 2 eq.). After ten minutes 1,8-diazabicyclo[5.4.0]undec-7-ene (5.4 mL, 36.4 mmol, 2.8 eq.) was added. The reaction mixture was then warmed to 85 °C and allowed to proceed overnight. The heating bath was removed and the reaction was quenched with water. The crude reaction mixture was diluted with water and ethyl

acetate. The layers were separated and the aqueous layer was washed four times with ethyl acetate. The organic layers were combined, dried over sodium sulfate, decanted, and concentrated. Flash column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 10% to 15 ethyl acetate / hexanes) to afford the desired product as an oil (4.69 g, 94%).

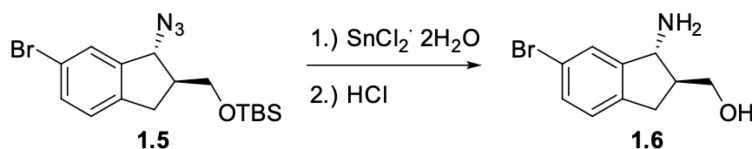
**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.51 (s, 1 H) 7.40 (d, 1 H, *J* = 8.1 Hz), 7.11 (d, 1 H, *J* = 8.4 Hz), 4.74 (d, 1 H, *J* = 6.0 Hz), 3.81 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 5.1, 10.3 Hz), 3.67 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 5.9, 10.3 Hz), 2.69 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 7.0, 15.8 Hz), 2.63 (m, 1 H), 0.91 (s, 9 H), 0.09 (overlapping s, 3 H), 0.08 (overlapping s, 3 H).

**<sup>13</sup>C NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 143.0, 141.4, 131.8, 128.0, 126.7, 120.6, 61.7, 63.38, 49.7, 32.9, 26.0, -5.3

**IR**  $\nu_{\max}$  2928, 2857, 2359, 2095, 1472, 1388, 1252, 1113, 984, 837, 777, 668

**AMM(ESI)**: sample did not ionize.

**$[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{23}$**  = - 40 ° (*c* 0.22, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>)



**Aminol 1.6.** To a solution of **1.5** (3.32 g, 8.69 mmol) in methanol (29 mL, 0.3 M) under nitrogen at 0 °C was added tin chloride dihydrate (3.92 g, 17.4 mmol, 2 eq.). The reaction was allowed to proceed overnight. To the reaction mixture was then added 1 M aqueous HCl (15 mL). After five hours no starting material was observed. The pH of the reaction mixture was adjusted to 12 with 1 M aqueous NaOH. This solution was diluted with ethyl acetate and brine. The layers were separated. The aqueous layer was washed three times with ethyl acetate. The organic layers were combined, dried with magnesium sulfate, decanted and concentrated to afford the product (1.59 g, 75%).

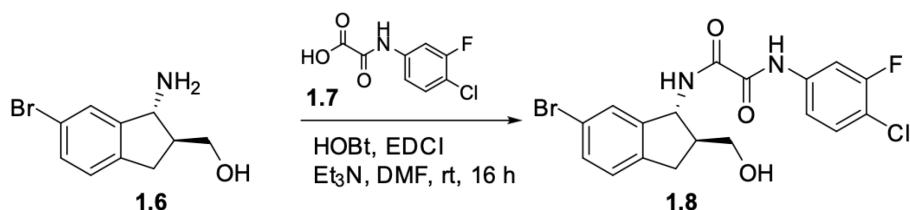
**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, DMSO): δ 7.48 (s, 1 H), 7.30 (d, 1 H, *J* = 8.0 Hz), 7.12 (d, 1 H, *J* = 7.9 Hz), 3.93 (d, 1 H, *J* = 8.5 Hz), 3.66 (dd, 1 H, 5.1, 10.6 Hz), 3.58 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 6.2, 10.6 Hz), 2.84 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 8.1, 16.0 Hz), 2.54 (partially obscured dd, 1 H, *J* = 9.5, 16.0 Hz), 2.10 (m, 1 H).

**<sup>13</sup>C NMR** (500 MHz, DMSO): δ 151.8, 141.5, 129.9, 127.3, 127.0, 119.7, 62.8, 59.3, 54.0.

**IR**  $\nu_{\max}$  3393, 2945, 2843, 2369, 2329, 1659, 1420, 1375, 1247, 1127

**AMM(ESI)** *m/z* 242.0204 [calcd for C<sub>10</sub>H<sub>12</sub>BrNO (M+H)<sup>+</sup> 242.0181]

**$[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{23}$**  = + 1 ° (*c* 0.18, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>)



**Alcohol 1.8.** To a solution of **1.6** (0.643 g, 2.65 mmol) and **1.7** (0.693 g, 3.18 mmol, 1.2 eq.) in dimethylformamide (6.6 mL, 0.5 M) at 0 °C under nitrogen was added EDCI hydrochloride (0.978 g, 6.36 mmol, 2.4 eq.) and hydroxybenzotriazole hydrate (1.22 g, 6.36 mmol, 2.4 eq.). After five minutes triethylamine was added (1.3 mL, 6.36 mmol, 2.4 eq.) and the reaction was allowed to proceed overnight. The reaction mixture was quenched with saturated aqueous sodium bicarbonate. The reaction mixture was diluted with water and ethyl acetate. The layers were separated and the aqueous layer was washed with ethyl acetate. The aqueous layer was adjusted to pH 9 with 1 M aqueous sodium hydroxide and washed twice with ethyl acetate. The organic layers were combined, dried with magnesium sulfate, and decanted. The organic layer was loaded onto celite and the product was purified with a silica gel plug (50% ethyl acetate / hexanes to 10% methanol / ethyl acetate) to afford the product as a white solid (0.763 g, 65%).

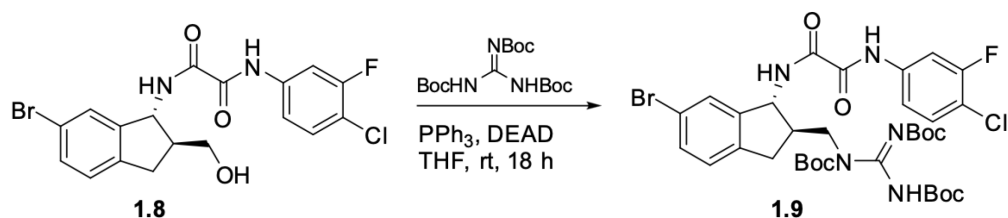
**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  11.06 (s, 1 H), 9.42 (d, 1 H,  $J = 8.7$  Hz), 7.97 (dd, 1 H,  $J = 2.3, 11.8$  Hz), 7.75 (app. d, 1 H,  $J = 8.8$  Hz), 7.60 (t, 1 H,  $J = 8.7$  Hz), 7.39 (app. d, 1 H,  $J = 7.6$  Hz), 7.32 (s, 1 H), 7.21 (d, 1 H,  $J = 8.0$  Hz), 5.22 (t, 1 H,  $J = 8.4$  Hz), 4.75 (t, 1 H,  $J = 5.0$  Hz), 3.54 (m, 2 H), 3.00 (m, 1 H), 2.70 (m, 2 H).

**<sup>13</sup>C NMR** (500 MHz, DMSO):  $\delta$  160.6, 159.5, 157.4 (d,  $J_{CF} = 244$  Hz), 156.4, 146.5, 142.3, 139.0 (d,  $J_{CF} = 10$  Hz), 131.2, 130.9, 127.4, 127.2, 119.7, 118.0 (d,  $J_{CF} = 3$  Hz), 114.9 (d,  $J_{CF} = 17$  Hz), 109.1 (d,  $J_{CF} = 26$  Hz), 62.1, 56.5, 49.1, 33.5.

**IR**  $\nu_{max}$  3372, 3258, 2919, 2367, 1660, 1515, 1060, 956, 674, 441, 426

**AMM**(ESI)  $m/z$  441.0021 [calcd for  $C_{18}H_{15}BrClFN_2O_3$  ( $M+H$ )<sup>+</sup> 441.0017]

**$[\alpha]_D^{23}$**  = + 16 ° ( $c$  0.26,  $CH_2Cl_2$ )



**Bromide 1.9.** To a solution of alcohol **1.8** (0.180 g, 0.407 mmol) and triphenylphosphine (0.427 g, 1.63 mmol, 4 eq.) in tetrahydrofuran (15 mL, 0.02 M) under nitrogen at room temperature was added tribocguanidine (0.242 g, 0.403 mmol, 0.99 eq.). To this mixture was slowly added diethyl

azodicarboxylate (0.43 mL, 1.63 mmol, 4 eq.) and the reaction was allowed to proceed overnight. The reaction was quenched with aqueous sodium bicarbonate and diluted with ethyl acetate and water. The layers were separated and the aqueous layer was washed three times with ethyl acetate. The organic layers were combined, dried with sodium sulfate, decanted and concentrated. The crude reaction mixture was purified using flash column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, dry loading on celite, 10% ethyl acetate / hexanes) to afford a white solid (0.108 g, 68%).

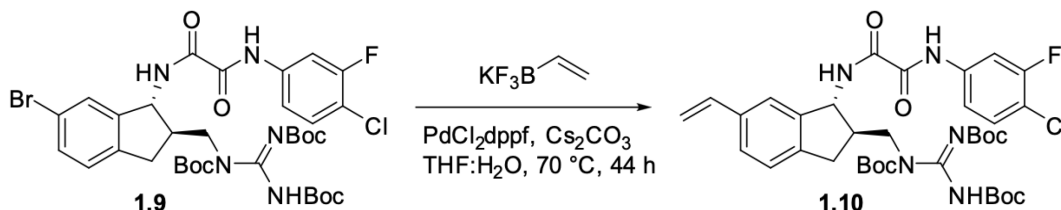
**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 10.61 (br s, 1 H), 9.38 (s, 1 H), 7.89 (d, 1 H, *J* = 9.0 Hz), 7.76 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 2.4, 10.6 Hz), 7.37 (m, 2 H), 7.33 (s, 1 H), 7.27 (m, 1 H), 7.11 (d, 1 H, *J* = 8.7 Hz), 5.24 (t, 1 H, *J* = 8.1 Hz), 4.13 (m, 2 H), 3.14 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 7.9, 15.8 Hz), 2.91 (m, 1 H), 2.74 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 9.0, 15.8 Hz), 1.51 (m, 27 H).

**<sup>13</sup>C NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 159.74, 158.2 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 248 Hz), 157.32, 153.39, 153.25, 143.64, 140.81, 136.5 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 9.6 Hz), 131.52, 130.94, 127.20, 126.55, 120.70, 117.2 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 18.1 Hz), 116.04 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 3.5 Hz), 108.59 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 26.1 Hz), 83.79, 58.44, 49.78, 48.12, 34.72, 29.84, 28.38, 28.19, 28.16, 28.13, 28.09, 27.96.

**IR** *v*<sub>max</sub> 3277, 2972, 2927, 2852, 2360, 1762, 1664, 1610, 1517, 1251, 1148, 664

**AMM**(ESI) *m/z* 782.1984 [calcd for C<sub>34</sub>H<sub>42</sub>BrClFN<sub>5</sub>O<sub>8</sub> (M+H)<sup>+</sup> 782.1968]

[α]<sub>D</sub><sup>23</sup> = + 15 ° (*c* 0.4, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>)



*Alkene 1.10.* Bromide **1.9** (0.0987 g, 0.126 mmol), Pd(dppf)Cl<sub>2</sub> (0.0082 g, 0.0101 mmol, 0.08 eq.), vinyltrifluoroborate (0.0506 g, 0.378 mmol, 3 eq.) and cesium carbonate (0.164 g, 0.504 mmol, 4 eq.) under nitrogen at room temperature were dissolved in nitrogen-sparged THF/water (32 mL, 10:1, 0.004 M) in a round bottom flask equipped with a reflux condenser. The reaction mixture was heated to reflux overnight. After 21 h, the reaction mixture was cooled to room temperature and diluted with water. The reaction mixture was then filtered through celite with diethyl ether and diluted with water. The layers were separated and the aqueous layer was washed three times with diethyl ether. The organic layers were combined, dried over sodium sulfate, decanted and concentrated. The crude product mixture was purified using flash column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 20% hexanes / ethyl acetate) to afford product as a white solid (0.058 g, 63%).

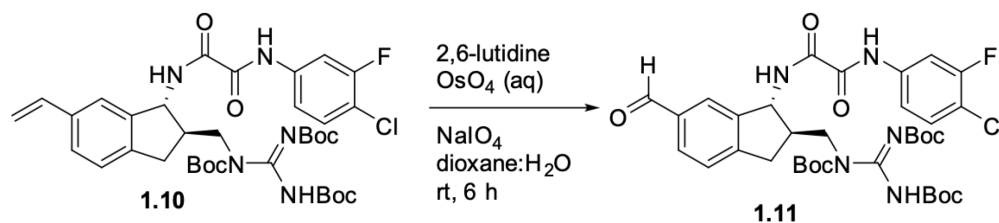
**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 10.55 (br s, 1 H), 9.38 (s, 1 H), 7.82 (d, 1 H, *J* = 9.1 Hz), 7.76 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 2.5, 10.6 Hz), 7.38 (t, 1 H, *J* = 8.3 Hz), 7.30 (m, 1 H), 7.25 (m, 1 H), 7.23 (s, 1H), 7.19 (d, 1 H, *J* = 7.8 Hz), 6.67 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 10.9, 17.5 Hz), 5.69 (app. d, 1 H, *J* = 17.6 Hz), 5.25 (t, 1 H, *J* = 8.7 Hz), 5.20 (d, 1 H, *J* = 10.9 Hz), 4.14 (m, 1 H), 3.17 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 7.8, 15.8 Hz), 2.88 (m, 1 H), 2.79 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 8.8, 15.7 Hz), 1.56 - 1.44 (m, 27 H).

**<sup>13</sup>C NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 159.7, 158.2 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 248 Hz), 157.5, 153.3, 153.2, 141.7 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 8 Hz), 137.0, 136.6, 136.5, 130.9, 126.8, 125.1, 121.5, 117.1 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 18 Hz), 116.0 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 3 Hz), 113.8, 108.4 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 26 Hz), 83.7, 58.5, 50.0, 48.4, 35.0, 28.2, 28.2, 28.1

**IR** *v*<sub>max</sub> 3277, 2977. 2924, 2857, 2360, 2336, 1757, 1664, 1517, 1366, 1243, 1150 668

**AMM**(ESI) *m/z* 752.2864 [calcd for C<sub>36</sub>H<sub>45</sub>ClFN<sub>5</sub>O<sub>8</sub> (M+Na)<sup>+</sup> 752.2838]

**[α]<sub>D</sub><sup>23</sup>** = + 19 ° (*c* 0.5, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>)



**Aldehyde 1.11.** To a solution of alkene **1.10** (0.136 g, 0.186 mmol) in THF/water (3:1, 3 mL, 0.05 M) was added osmium tetroxide (2 mol% in water, 0.95 mL, 0.019 mmol, 0.1 eq.) then sodium periodate (0.120 g, 0.559 mmol, 3 eq.). After three hours, the reaction was quenched with saturated aqueous sodium thiosulfate and allowed to stir overnight. The reaction mixture was diluted with ethyl acetate and the layers were separated. The aqueous layer was washed three times with ethyl acetate. The organic layers were combined, dried with magnesium sulfate, decanted and concentrated. The crude product mixture was purified using flash column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 100% hexanes to 30% ethyl acetate / hexanes, ethyl acetate flush) to afford the product as a solid (0.112 g, 82%).

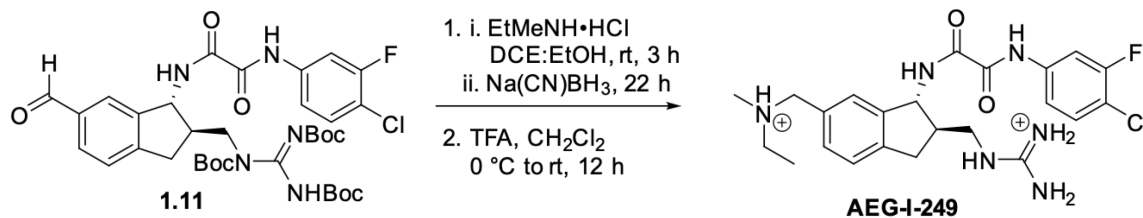
**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 10.59 (br s, 1 H), 9.96 (s, 1 H), 9.31 (s, 1 H), 7.90 (d, 1 H, *J* = 8.7 Hz), 7.79 (d, 1 H, *J* = 7.7 Hz), 7.75 (m, 1 H), 7.72 (s, 1 H), 7.39 (t, 2 H, *J* = 8.3 Hz), 7.24 (d, 1 H, *J* = 8.6 Hz), 5.31 (t, 1 H, *J* = 8.7 Hz), 4.16 (m, 1 H), 3.27 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 7.5, 16.1 Hz), 2.92 (m, 2 H), 1.59 - 1.43 (m, 27 H).

**<sup>13</sup>C NMR** (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): δ 191.7, 159.8, 158.3 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 248 Hz), 157.3, 153.6, 153.2, 149.2, 142.7, 136.4 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 10 Hz), 136.1, 131.0, 130.7, 125.7, 125.1, 117.2 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 18 Hz), 116.0 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 4 Hz), 108.5 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 26 Hz), 83.8, 58.3, 49.8, 48.0, 35.5, 28.2, 28.12, 28.08

**IR** *v*<sub>max</sub> 3393, 3284, 2979, 2932, 2852, 1792, 1725, 1666, 1606, 1517, 1369, 1295, 1248, 1147, 775

**AMM**(ESI) *m/z* 732.2798 [calcd for C<sub>35</sub>H<sub>43</sub>ClFN<sub>5</sub>O<sub>9</sub> (M+H)<sup>+</sup> 732.2812]

**[α]<sub>D</sub><sup>23</sup>** = + 31 ° (*c* 2.0, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>)



**AEG-I-249.** To a solution of **1.11** (0.030 g, 0.039 mmol) in dichloroethane (3 mL, 0.02 M) with 3 Å molecular sieves under nitrogen atmosphere at room temperature was added ethylmethylamine (0.08 mL, 0.948 mmol, 20 eq.). After stirring for one hour, sodium triacetoxyborohydride (0.016 g, 0.26 mmol, 5 eq.) was added. After 7 hours, no starting material was observed by TLC or LC/MS. The reaction was quenched with saturated aqueous sodium bicarbonate and diluted with ethyl acetate. The layers were separated, and the aqueous layer was washed three times with ethyl acetate. The organic layers were combined, dried over sodium sulfate, decanted, and concentrated. Flash column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 0% to 5% MeOH in dichloromethane) afforded a partially purified amine. This amine was dissolved in dichloromethane (3.9 mL, 0.01 M). To this solution was added trifluoroacetic acid (0.12 mL, 1.6 mmol, 40 eq.). After two days complete conversion was observed by LC/MS. The reaction mixture was concentrated, dissolved in 2.3 mL 1:1 acetonitrile/water and purified by reverse phase HPLC (15 mL/min, 15-70% H<sub>2</sub>O/ACN + 0.1% TFA, 10 min gradient). The isolated fractions were frozen and concentrated by lyophilization to afford **AEG-I-249** as a white solid (10 mg, 37% over two steps).

**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, acetone-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 11.79 (s, 1 H), 10.30 (s, 1 H), 8.80 (m, 2 H), 7.99 (ddd, 1 H, *J* = 1.0, 2.4, 11.6 Hz), 7.90 – 7.65 (br s, 2 H), 7.72 (m, 1 H), 7.55 – 7.46 (m, 3 H), 7.33 (d, 1 H, *J* = 7.7 Hz), 5.34 (t, 1 H, *J* = 8.4 Hz), 4.55 – 4.23 (br d, *J* = 80.9 Hz), 3.68 – 3.55 (m, 2 H), 3.41 – 3.24 (br s, 1 H), 3.30 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 8.0, 15.9 Hz), 3.21 – 3.08 (br s, 1 H), 2.96 (m, 1 H), 2.84 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 9.0, 15.9 Hz), 2.78 (s, 3 H), 1.37 (t, 3 H, *J* = 7.2 Hz)

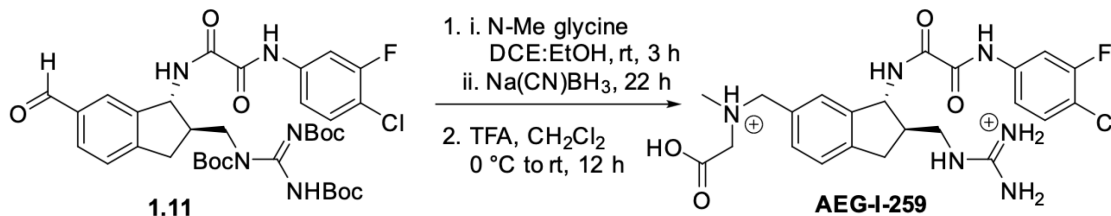
**<sup>13</sup>C NMR** (500 MHz, acetone-d<sub>6</sub>, mixture of rotamers): δ 161.7 (q, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 34.0 Hz, TFA), 161.0609, 160.0 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 249 Hz), 158.6 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 245 Hz), 159.3, 159.2, 159.2, 159.1, 159.1, 144.5, 143.8, 139.2 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 10.1 Hz), 139.1 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 10.0 Hz), 132.0, 131.6, 129.8, 127.7, 126.3, 117.9 (q, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 294 Hz), 117.9 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 3.5 Hz), 117.1 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 3.5 Hz), 116.3 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 18.0 Hz), 109.3 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 26.2 Hz), 109.2 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 26.1 Hz), 59.4, 58.8, 58.7, 51.2, 51.0, 48.0, 48.0, 44.6, 44.5, 38.7, 35.1, 35.1, 9.4.

**IR**  $\nu_{\max}$  3355, 2359, 2341, 1682, 1517, 1428, 1203, 1135, 975, 837, 801, 722, 668

**AMM**(ESI) *m/z* 475.2011 [calcd for C<sub>23</sub>H<sub>29</sub>ClFN<sub>6</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (M+H)<sup>+</sup> 475.2025]

**[ $\alpha$ ]<sub>D</sub><sup>23</sup> = + 9 ° (c 0.09, MeOH)**





**AEG-I-259.** To a solution of **1.11** (0.060 g, 0.079 mmol) in dichloroethane (2 mL, 0.04 M) with 3 Å molecular sieves under nitrogen atmosphere at room temperature was added a solution of sarcosine (0.140 g, 1.57 mmol, 20 eq.) in methanol (2 mL). After stirring for 30 minutes, sodium triacetoxyborohydride (0.083 g, 0.39 mmol, 5 eq.) was added. After 24 hours, no conversion was observed by LC/MS. Sodium cyanoborohydride (0.030 g, 0.48 mmol, 6 eq.) was then added. After two hours, no starting material was observed by TLC or LC/MS. The reaction was quenched with saturated aqueous sodium bicarbonate and diluted with ethyl acetate. The layers were separated, and the aqueous layer was washed three times with ethyl acetate. The organic layers were combined, dried over sodium sulfate, decanted, and concentrated. Flash column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 0% to 10% MeOH in dichloromethane) afforded a partially purified amine. This amine was dissolved in dichloromethane (5.5 mL, 0.01 M). To this solution was added trifluoroacetic acid (0.16 mL, 2.2 mmol, 40 eq.). After two days complete conversion was observed by LC/MS. The reaction mixture was concentrated, dissolved in 2.3 mL 1:1 acetonitrile/water and purified by reverse phase HPLC (15 mL/min, 5-80% H<sub>2</sub>O/ACN + 0.1% TFA, 20 min gradient). The isolated fractions were frozen and concentrated by lyophilization to afford **AEG-I-259** as a white solid (6.8 mg, 12% over two steps).

**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, acetone-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 11.10 (s, 1 H), 9.47 (d, 1 H, *J* = 9.1 Hz), 7.98 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 2.4, 11.8 Hz), 7.83 (m, 1 H), 7.77 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 2.3, 8.9 Hz), 7.60 (t, 1 H, *J* = 8.7 Hz), 7.31 (s, 1 H), 7.25 (s, 1 H), 5.20 (t, 1 H, *J* = 8.8 Hz), 4.09 (s, 2 H), 3.66 (s, 2 H), 3.39 (m, 1 H), 3.12 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 8.0, 15.8 Hz), 2.83 (m, 1 H), 2.68 (dd, 1 H, *J* = 9.3, 15.7 Hz), 2.58 (s, 3 H).

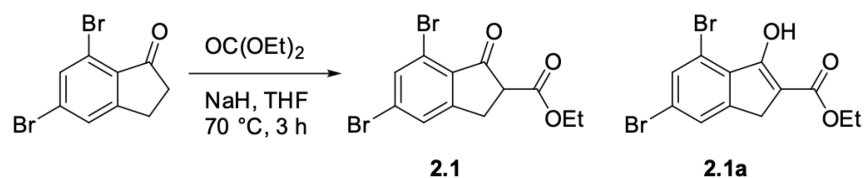
**<sup>13</sup>C NMR** (500 MHz, acetone-d<sub>6</sub>): δ 168.5, 159.9, 158.8, 156.8 (q, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 34.0 Hz, TFA), 157.1, 156.8 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 244 Hz), 143.0, 142.9, 142.1, 138.3 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 10.0 Hz), 130.7, 130.2, 125.6, 124.9, 117.3 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 10.0 Hz), 117.2 (q, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 299.7 Hz, TFA), 114.4 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 18.0 Hz), 108.5 (d, *J*<sub>CF</sub> = 25.8 Hz), 59.1, 56.9, 55.2, 45.6, 42.9, 40.5, 33.7.

**IR** ν<sub>max</sub> 3398, 2917, 2849 2359, 2342, 1683, 1672, 1645, 1635, 1626, 1203, 1138 cm<sup>-1</sup>

**AMM** (ESI) *m/z* 505.1772 [calcd for C<sub>23</sub>H<sub>27</sub>ClFN<sub>6</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (M+H)<sup>+</sup> 505.1766]

[α]<sub>D</sub><sup>23</sup> = + 9 ° (*c* 0.2, MeOH)

## Synthesis of MCG-III-051



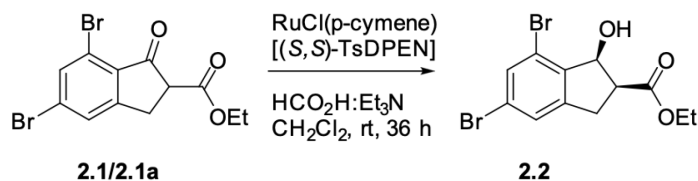
**Tautomers 2.1 and 2.1a.** To a stirred suspension of sodium hydride (60% dispersion in mineral oil, 82.8 mg, 2.07 mmol) and diethyl carbonate (1.3 mL, 10. mmol) in THF (3 mL) in a sealed microwave vial at room temperature under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere was added dropwise a solution of 5,7-dibromo-1*H*-indanone (500. mg, 1.72 mmol) in THF (5.6 mL). The reaction mixture was heated to 70 °C for 3 h, then cooled and diluted with EtOAc and H<sub>2</sub>O and neutralized with aq. 1N HCl. Layers were separated and the resulting aqueous layer was extracted with EtOAc. The combined organic layers were washed with sat. aq. NaCl and dried over anhydrous MgSO<sub>4</sub> then concentrated *in vacuo* to afford the desired product as an off-white solid (588 mg, 94% yield). The product was isolated as a mixture of keto and enol tautomers (ratio 2:1 by <sup>1</sup>H-NMR).

**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, Chloroform-*d*): keto tautomer δ 7.72 (s, 1H), 7.61 (s, 1H), 4.24 (q, *J* = 6.9 Hz, 2H), 3.74 (dd, *J* = 8.6, 4.2 Hz, 1H), 3.50 (dd, *J* = 17.7, 4.3 Hz, 1H), 3.28 (dd, *J* = 17.5, 8.4 Hz, 1H), 1.31 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 3H); enol tautomer δ 10.76 (broad s, 1H), 7.68 (s, 1H), 7.53 (s, 1H), 4.32 (q, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 3.47 (s, 2H), 1.36 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 3H);

**<sup>13</sup>C NMR** (126 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 195.41, 169.05, 168.25, 157.17, 147.04, 135.58, 134.39, 134.26, 131.65, 130.30, 128.76, 127.02, 123.61, 120.98, 116.05, 103.77, 99.95, 61.99, 60.48, 53.92, 32.21, 29.01, 14.35, 14.14;

**IR** (ATR)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3300, 2983, 1653, 1418, 1243, 1018, 771 cm<sup>-1</sup>;

**AMM** (ESI) *m/z* 359.9018 [calcd for C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>10</sub>Br<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (M+H)<sup>+</sup> 359.8997].



**b-Hydroxyester 2.2.** To a stirred solution of tautomers **2.1** and **2.1a** (92.9 mg, 0.257 mmol) and RuCl(p-cymene)[(S,S)-TsDPEN] (3.3 mg, 0.005 mmol) in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (2.5 mL) at room temperature under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere was added formic acid:triethyl amine complex 5:2 (0.03 mL, 0.5 mmol). The reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 36 h, then diluted with sat. aq. NaHCO<sub>3</sub>. Layers were separated and the resulting aqueous layer was extracted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The combined organic layers were washed with sat. aq. NaCl and dried over anhydrous MgSO<sub>4</sub> then concentrated

*in vacuo*. Flash column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 80:20 hexanes:EtOAc) afforded the product as a colorless oil (0.085 g, 91% yield).

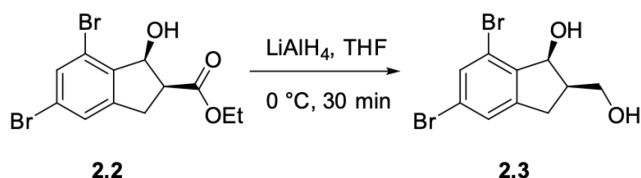
$[\alpha]_D^{23} +21.82$  (c. 0.21, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>);

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>): <sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 7.55 (s, 1H), 7.36 (s, 1H), 5.38 (dd, *J* = 5.8, 4.6 Hz, 1H), 4.26 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 3.58 (dd, *J* = 16.3, 9.8 Hz, 1H), 3.35 (ddd, *J* = 9.9, 8.3, 5.9 Hz, 1H), 3.11 (dd, *J* = 16.4, 8.3 Hz, 1H), 2.77 (d, *J* = 4.6 Hz, 1H), 1.33 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H);

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (126 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 171.52, 146.13, 141.37, 132.92, 127.23, 123.54, 120.76, 75.35, 61.17, 48.92, 33.34, 14.24;

IR (thin film, KBr)  $\nu_{\max}$  3460, 2929, 1730, 1216, 1038, 853 cm<sup>-1</sup>;

AMM (ESI) *m/z* 384.9057 [calcd for C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>12</sub>Br<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>Na (M+Na)<sup>+</sup> 384.9051].



**Diol 2.3.** To a precooled (0 °C) solution of **2.2** (373 mg, 1.02 mmol) in THF (5.1 mL) under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere was added portion wise lithium aluminum hydride (31 mg, 0.82 mmol). The reaction mixture was stirred for 30 min at 0 °C then quenched with sat. aq. sodium potassium tartrate and stirred at room temperature for 10 min. The quenched solution was diluted with H<sub>2</sub>O then EtOAc. The layers were separated, and the resulting aqueous layer was extracted with EtOAc. The combined organic layers were washed with sat. aq. NaCl dried over MgSO<sub>4</sub> and concentrated *in vacuo*. Flash column chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub> 20:80 hexanes:EtOAc) afforded the product as a white solid (285 mg, 86% yield).

$[\alpha]_D^{23} +25.21$  (c. 0.15, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>);

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 7.53 (s, 1H), 7.36 (s, 1H), 5.34 (dd, *J* = 6.7, 2.9 Hz, 1H), 4.07 – 3.99 (m, 1H), 3.97 – 3.84 (m, 1H), 3.17 (dd, *J* = 16.4, 9.1 Hz, 1H), 2.94 (dd, *J* = 16.4, 8.3 Hz, 1H), 2.76 – 2.64 (m, 1H), 2.57 – 2.43 (m, 2H);

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (126 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 147.61, 142.70, 132.45, 127.50, 123.28, 120.37, 77.09, 61.95, 44.40, 33.42.

IR (ATR)  $\nu_{\max}$  3220, 1586, 1557, 1309, 1158, 849, 686, 561 cm<sup>-1</sup>;



**Silyl ether 2.4.** To a precooled solution (0 °C) of **2.3** (166 mg, 0.516 mmol) and 1H-imidazole (70.2 mg, 1.03 mmol) in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (5 mL) under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere was added *tert*-butylchlorodimethylsilane (78 mg, 0.52 mmol). The resulting mixture was stirred at 0 °C for 1 h, then diluted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> and aq. sat. NH<sub>4</sub>Cl. The layers were separated and the resulting aqueous layer was extracted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The combined organic layers were washed with sat. aq. NaCl, dried over MgSO<sub>4</sub>, and concentrated *in vacuo*. Flash chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 80:20 hexanes:EtOAc) afforded the product as a colorless oil (182 mg, 81% yield).

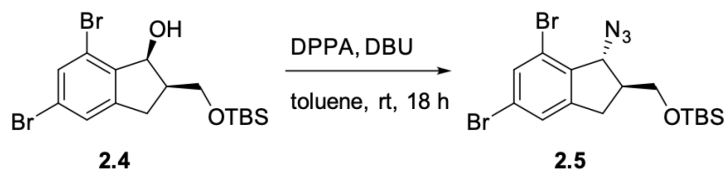
$[\alpha]_D^{23} +24.15$  (c. 0.094, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>);

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, Chloroform-*d*)  $\delta$  7.53 (s, 1H), 7.33 (s, 1H), 5.24 (t, *J* = 5.1 Hz, 1H), 4.09 – 3.91 (m, 2H), 3.12 (d, *J* = 4.2 Hz, 1H), 3.06 (dd, *J* = 16.2, 9.6 Hz, 1H), 2.90 (dd, *J* = 16.2, 8.0 Hz, 1H), 2.67 – 2.53 (m, 1H), 0.91 (s, 9H), 0.11 (d, *J* = 3.7 Hz, 6H);

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (126 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  147.24, 143.43, 132.56, 127.17, 122.82, 120.85, 76.60, 62.45, 44.78, 33.79, 25.82, 18.17, -5.47, -5.54;

IR (ATR)  $\nu_{\max}$  2952, 2927, 2855, 1590, 1252, 1079, 833, 774 cm<sup>-1</sup>;

AMM (ESI) *m/z* 456.9801 [calcd for C<sub>16</sub>H<sub>24</sub>Br<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>NaSi (M+Na)<sup>+</sup> 456.9810].



**Azide 2.5.** To a solution of **2.4** (160. mg, 0.367 mmol) in toluene (1.8 mL) at room temperature under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere was added diphenylphosphoryl azide (0.24 mL, 1.1 mmol) then 1,8-diazabicyclo[5.4.0]undec-7-ene (0.16 mL, 1.1 mmol). The resulting mixture was stirred at room temperature for 18 h, then diluted with EtOAc and aq. sat. NH<sub>4</sub>Cl. The layers were separated and the resulting aqueous layer was extracted with EtOAc. The combined organic layers were washed with sat. aq. NaCl, dried over MgSO<sub>4</sub>, and concentrated *in vacuo*. Flash chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 95:5 hexanes:EtOAc) afforded the product as a colorless oil (124 mg, 78% yield).

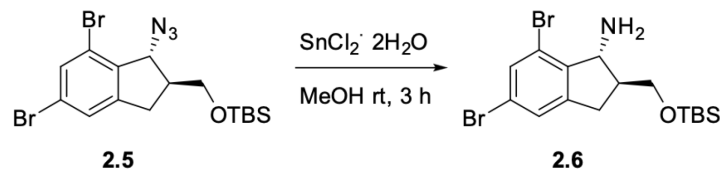
$[\alpha]_D^{23} +19.44$  (c. 0.31, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>);

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, Chloroform-*d*)  $\delta$  7.57 (s, 1H), 7.32 (s, 1H), 4.78 (s, 1H), 3.68 (dd, *J* = 10.3, 5.6 Hz, 1H), 3.47 (t, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 3.25 (dd, *J* = 17.5, 8.7 Hz, 1H), 2.68 (d, *J* = 13.8 Hz, 2H), 0.86 (s, 10H), 0.04 (d, *J* = 3.7 Hz, 6H);

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (126 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  147.11, 139.01, 133.04, 127.33, 123.37, 121.40, 68.76, 63.86, 48.04, 34.03, 25.75, 18.15, -5.44, -5.50;

IR (ATR)  $\nu_{\max}$  2953, 2929, 2856, 2096, 1559, 1395, 1106, 814, 687 cm<sup>-1</sup>;

**AMM** (ESI)  $m/z$  430.9930 [calcd for  $C_{16}H_{23}Br_2ONSi$  (M-N<sub>2</sub>) 430.9916].



**Amine 2.6.** To a precooled solution of **2.5** (500. mg, 1.08 mmol) in MeOH (2 mL) under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere was added dropwise a solution of tin (II) chloride (366 mg, 1.63 mmol) in MeOH (3.5 mL). The resulting mixture was stirred at room temperature for 3 h, then concentrated *in vacuo*. The resulting solid was taken up in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>O, then treated with 1N aq. NaOH to remove emulsions. The layers were separated, and the resulting aqueous phase was extracted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The combined organic layers were washed with sat. aq. NaCl dried over MgSO<sub>4</sub> and concentrated *in vacuo* to afford the product as a white solid (433 mg, 92% yield).

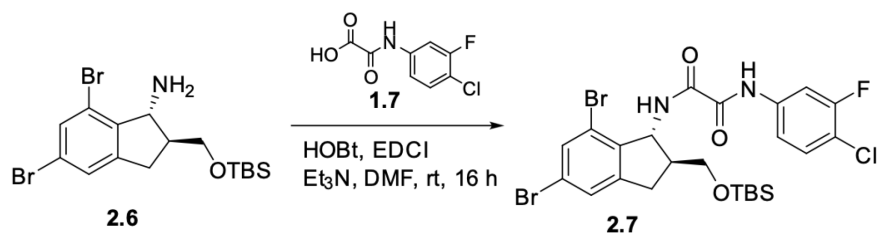
$[\alpha]_D^{24} +56.85$  (c. 0.11, CH<sub>3</sub>OH);

**<sup>1</sup>H NMR** (500 MHz, Chloroform-*d*)  $\delta$  7.47 (s, 1H), 7.27 (s, 1H), 4.19 (d,  $J = 3.8$  Hz, 1H), 3.61 (d,  $J = 6.5$  Hz, 2H), 3.18 (dd,  $J = 16.8, 8.2$  Hz, 1H), 2.70 (dd,  $J = 16.8, 4.8$  Hz, 1H), 2.41 – 2.28 (m, 1H), 1.87 (s, 2H), 0.85 (s, 9H), 0.03 (s, 6H);

**<sup>13</sup>C NMR** (126 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  146.52, 144.62, 132.51, 127.34, 121.64, 120.38, 64.56, 60.14, 50.15, 33.70, 25.81, 18.20, -5.41, -5.45;

**IR** (ATR)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  2951, 2927, 2855, 1587, 1557, 1252, 1102, 834, 748 cm<sup>-1</sup>;

**AMM** (ESI)  $m/z$  434.0139 [calcd for  $C_{11}H_{26}N_3O_3Br_2Si$  (M+H)<sup>+</sup> 434.0110].



**Oxalamide 2.7.** To a solution of **2.6** (693 mg, 1.50 mmol), **1.7** (339 mg, 1.50 mmol), 1-hydroxybenzotriazole hydrate (785 mg, 3.61 mmol), and N-(3-dimethylaminopropyl)-N'-ethylcarbodiimide hydrochloride (691 mg, 3.61 mmol) in DMF (7.5 mL) at room temperature under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere was added triethylamine (0.96 mL, 6.9 mmol). The resulting mixture was stirred at room temperature for 16 h, then concentrated *in vacuo*. The crude residue was taken up in EtOAc and quenched with sat. aq. NH<sub>4</sub>Cl. The layers were separated and the resulting aqueous phase was extracted with EtOAc. The combined organic layers were washed with H<sub>2</sub>O then sat.

aq. NaCl, dried over Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, and concentrated *in vacuo*. Flash chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 90:10 hexanes:EtOAc) afforded the product as a white solid (779 mg, 82% yield).

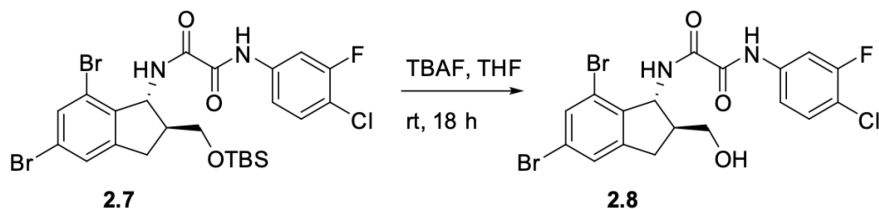
$[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{23} +3.04$  (c. 0.10, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>);

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, Chloroform-*d*)  $\delta$  9.38 (s, 1H), 7.75 – 7.66 (m, 2H), 7.52 (s, 1H), 7.36 (t, *J* = 8.3 Hz, 1H), 7.34 (s, 1H), 7.26 – 7.22 (m, 1H), 5.23 (dd, *J* = 9.0, 4.0 Hz, 1H), 3.75 – 3.64 (m, 2H), 3.27 (dd, *J* = 16.9, 8.4 Hz, 1H), 2.85 (dd, *J* = 16.8, 4.8 Hz, 1H), 2.64 – 2.53 (m, 1H), 0.83 (s, 9H), 0.04 (d, *J* = 3.8 Hz, 6H);

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (126 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>)  $\delta$  159.12, 158.75, 157.36, 157.14, 147.74, 138.88, 136.30, 136.22, 133.18, 130.82, 127.33, 123.32, 120.75, 117.24, 117.10, 115.95, 115.92, 108.53, 108.32, 64.13, 58.32, 48.74, 34.13, 25.73, 18.15, -5.49;

IR (ATR)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3279, 2928, 2855, 1667, 1593, 1517, 1154, 1110, 835, 665 cm<sup>-1</sup>;

AMM (ESI) *m/z* 630.9836 [calcd for C<sub>24</sub>H<sub>27</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>FCIBr<sub>2</sub>Si (M-H)<sup>-</sup> 630.9830].



**Alcohol 2.8.** To a solution of **2.7** (432 mg, 0.680 mmol) in THF (6.8 mL) at room temperature under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere was added tetra-*n*-butylammonium fluoride (1 M solution in THF, 2.0 mL, 2.0 mmol). The resulting mixture was stirred at room temperature for 18 h, then diluted with EtOAc and quenched with H<sub>2</sub>O. The layers were separated and the resulting aqueous phase was extracted with EtOAc. The combined organic layers were washed with sat. aq. NaCl, dried over Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, and concentrated *in vacuo*. Flash chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 50:50 hexanes:EtOAc) afforded the product as a white solid (467 mg, 88% yield).

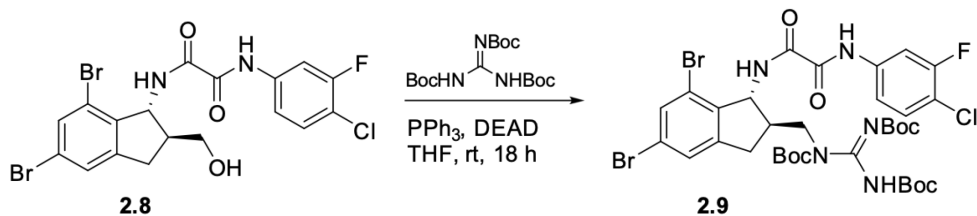
$[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{23} +95.19$  (c. 0.059, DMSO);

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>)  $\delta$  11.06 (s, 1H), 9.45 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 7.95 (d, *J* = 11.8 Hz, 1H), 7.74 (d, *J* = 8.9 Hz, 1H), 7.64 – 7.52 (m, 2H), 7.49 (s, 1H), 5.19 (dd, *J* = 9.2, 5.0 Hz, 1H), 4.80 (t, *J* = 5.2 Hz, 1H), 3.52 – 3.40 (m, 2H), 3.25 (dd, *J* = 16.8, 8.6 Hz, 1H), 2.76 (dd, *J* = 16.7, 6.0 Hz, 1H);

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (126 MHz, DMSO)  $\delta$  158.75, 157.70, 155.75, 148.81, 140.19, 138.24, 138.16, 131.79, 130.50, 127.02, 121.50, 120.06, 117.21, 114.34, 114.19, 108.45, 108.25, 62.16, 56.95, 48.32, 33.91;

IR (ATR)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3259, 1662, 1591, 1512, 1426, 857, 800, 746 cm<sup>-1</sup>;

AMM (ESI) *m/z* 516.8973 [calcd for C<sub>18</sub>H<sub>13</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>FCIBr<sub>2</sub> (M-H)<sup>-</sup> 516.8965].



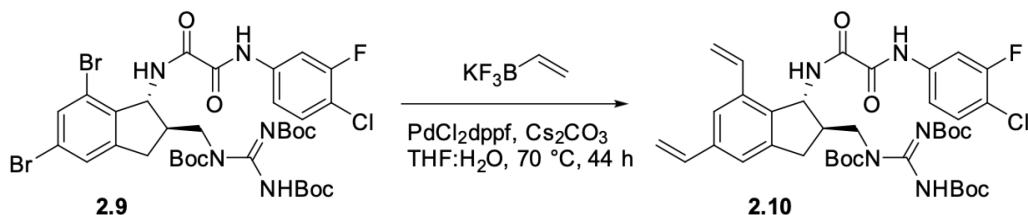
**Common Intermediate 2.9.** To a precooled (0 °C) solution of **2.8** (287 mg, 0.551 mmol), N,N',N''-triBocguanidine (198 mg, 0.551 mmol), and triphenylphosphine (217 mg, 0.827 mmol) in THF (11 mL) under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere was added dropwise a diethylazidocarboxylate (0.13 mL, 0.83 mmol). The resulting mixture was stirred at room temperature 18 h, then diluted with EtOAc and quenched with H<sub>2</sub>O. The layers were separated and the aqueous phase was extracted with EtOAc. The combined organic layers were washed with sat. aq. NaCl, dried over Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, and concentrated *in vacuo*. Flash chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 80:20 hexanes:EtOAc) afforded the product as a white solid (338 mg 71% yield).

[ $\alpha$ ]<sub>D</sub>23 +49.65 (c. 0.08, CHCl<sub>3</sub>);

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>)  $\delta$  11.04 (s, 1H), 10.20 (s, 1H), 9.50 (d, *J* = 8.7 Hz, 1H), 7.94 (dd, *J* = 11.7, 2.4 Hz, 1H), 7.72 (dd, *J* = 8.9, 2.3 Hz, 1H), 7.61 (s, 1H), 7.58 (t, *J* = 8.7 Hz, 1H), 7.48 (s, 1H), 4.98 (dd, *J* = 8.7, 4.9 Hz, 1H), 3.77 – 3.58 (m, 2H), 2.74 – 2.63 (m, 1H), 1.49 – 1.32 (m, 9H);  
<sup>13</sup>C NMR (126 MHz, DMSO)  $\delta$  158.85, 158.62, 158.26, 157.75, 155.81, 152.52, 150.44, 148.23, 147.38, 146.37, 139.51, 138.30, 138.22, 131.99, 130.60, 127.03, 121.64, 120.12, 117.30, 117.27, 114.42, 114.28, 108.51, 108.30, 82.14, 81.05, 79.07, 58.01, 49.34, 45.77, 34.96, 27.86, 27.76, 27.67, 27.62;

IR (ATR)  $\nu_{\max}$  3275, 2980, 1664, 1514, 1368, 1244, 1121, 762 cm<sup>-1</sup>;

AMM (ESI) *m/z* 860.1066 [calcd for C<sub>34</sub>H<sub>42</sub>N<sub>5</sub>O<sub>8</sub>FCIBr<sub>2</sub> (M+H)<sup>+</sup> 860.1073].



**Divinyl 2.10.** To a flask charged with **2.9** (200. mg, 0.232 mmol), potassium vinyltrifluoroborate (93 mg, 0.70 mmol), [1,1'-bis(diphenylphosphino)ferrocene]dichloropalladium (II) (19 mg, 0.023 mmol) and cesium carbonate (454 mg, 1.39 mmol) at room temperature under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere was added THF (10 mL) and H<sub>2</sub>O (1.5 mL). The flask was affixed with a reflux condenser and backfilled and purged with N<sub>2</sub> (4x) then the reaction mixture was heated to 70 °C and stirred for

44 h. The reaction mixture was allowed to cool then quenched with H<sub>2</sub>O and diluted with EtOAc. The layers were separated, and the resulting aqueous layer was extracted with EtOAc. The combined organic layers were washed with aq. sat. NaCl, dried over Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, and concentrated *in vacuo*. Flash chromatography (SiO<sub>2</sub>, 90:10 hexanes:EtOAc) afforded the product as a white solid (82 mg, 47% yield).

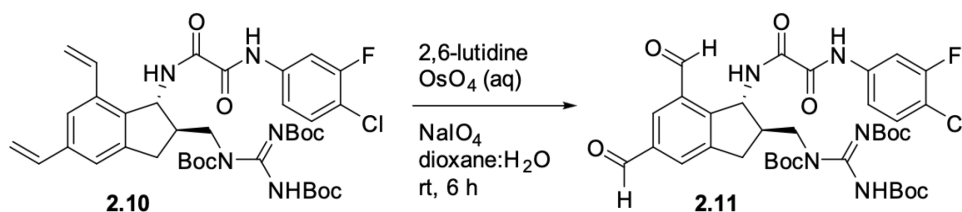
$[\alpha]_D^{23} +36.87$  (c. 0.025, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>);

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 10.41 (broad s, 1H), 9.35 (s, 2H), 7.67 (t, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 7.40 – 7.32 (m, 2H), 7.24 – 7.17 (m, 2H), 6.78 – 6.60 (m, 2H), 5.73 (dd, *J* = 31.0, 17.6 Hz, 2H), 5.40 (dd, *J* = 8.7, 3.6 Hz, 1H), 5.27 (dd, *J* = 11.0, 4.7 Hz, 2H), 4.00 – 3.85 (m, 2H), 3.26 (dd, *J* = 16.5, 8.0 Hz, 1H), 2.90 – 2.78 (m, 1H), 2.69 (dd, *J* = 16.5, 4.2 Hz, 1H), 1.52 – 1.43 (m, 27H);

<sup>13</sup>C NMR (126 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 158.99, 158.49, 157.24, 157.02, 153.32, 152.00, 143.89, 138.76, 136.71, 136.44, 136.34, 136.26, 135.32, 133.12, 130.70, 122.30, 121.76, 116.96, 116.82, 116.41, 115.81, 114.34, 108.37, 108.17, 83.48, 56.89, 49.81, 46.61, 34.58, 29.65, 28.03, 27.96, 27.89;

IR (ATR)  $\nu_{\max}$  3267, 1661, 1607, 1514, 1368, 1257, 1139, 763 cm<sup>-1</sup>;

AMM (ESI) *m/z* 754.3037 [calcd for C<sub>38</sub>H<sub>46</sub>N<sub>5</sub>O<sub>8</sub>FCl (M-H)<sup>-</sup> 754.3019].



**Dialdehyde 2.11.** To a precooled (0 °C) of **2.10** (81 mg, 0.11 mmol) in 1,4-dioxane (1.6 mL) and H<sub>2</sub>O (0.5 mL) under N<sub>2</sub> atmosphere was added osmium tetroxide (0.5% in H<sub>2</sub>O, 0.22 mL, 0.004 mmol) sodium periodate (182 mg, 0.861 mmol) and 2,6-lutidine (0.05 mL, 0.4 mmol). The resulting heterogeneous mixture was allowed to warm to room temperature and vigorously stirred for 6 h, then quenched with H<sub>2</sub>O and diluted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The layers were separated and the resulting aqueous layer was extracted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The combined organic layers were washed with aq. sat. NaCl, dried over Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>, and concentrated *in vacuo*. Flash chromatography (75:25 hexanes: EtOAc) afforded the desired product as a white solid (43 mg, 52% yield).

$[\alpha]_D^{22} +70.68$  (c. 0.074, CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>);

<sup>1</sup>H NMR (500 MHz, Chloroform-*d*) δ 10.18 (s, 1H), 10.09 (s, 1H), 9.18 (s, 1H), 8.23 (s, 1H), 8.11 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 8.03 (s, 1H), 7.65 (dd, *J* = 10.7, 2.5 Hz, 1H), 7.34 (t, *J* = 8.3 Hz, 2H), 7.14 (d, *J* = 8.7 Hz, 1H), 5.77 (dd, *J* = 8.1, 3.4 Hz, 1H), 4.01 (dd, *J* = 14.2, 6.6 Hz, 1H), 3.80 (dd, *J* = 14.1, 9.2 Hz, 1H), 3.50 (dd, *J* = 16.9, 8.2 Hz, 1H), 3.04 (s, 1H), 2.82 (dd, *J* = 17.2, 3.8 Hz, 2H), 1.48 (d, *J* = 19.8 Hz, 27H);

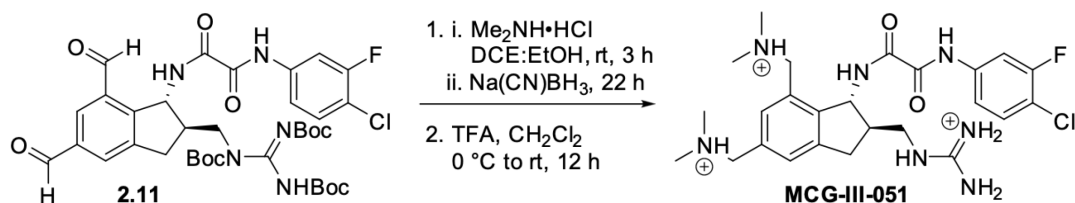
<sup>13</sup>C NMR (126 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 190.81, 190.37, 159.12, 158.84, 157.20, 157.15, 153.54, 153.09,



147.15, 146.88, 137.64, 136.65, 136.38, 136.30, 133.56, 131.79, 130.87, 130.43, 120.26, 117.18, 117.04, 115.96, 108.50, 108.29, 83.86, 77.16, 57.48, 49.96, 46.04, 34.68, 28.28, 28.16, 28.07, 28.02, 24.51;

**IR** (ATR)  $\nu_{\max}$  3460, 2921, 2850, 1730, 1591, 1558, 1450, 1397, 1061, 897, 850  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;

**AMM** (ESI)  $m/z$  760.2785 [calcd for  $\text{C}_{36}\text{H}_{44}\text{N}_5\text{O}_{10}\text{FCl}$  ( $\text{M}+\text{H}$ )<sup>+</sup> 760.2761].

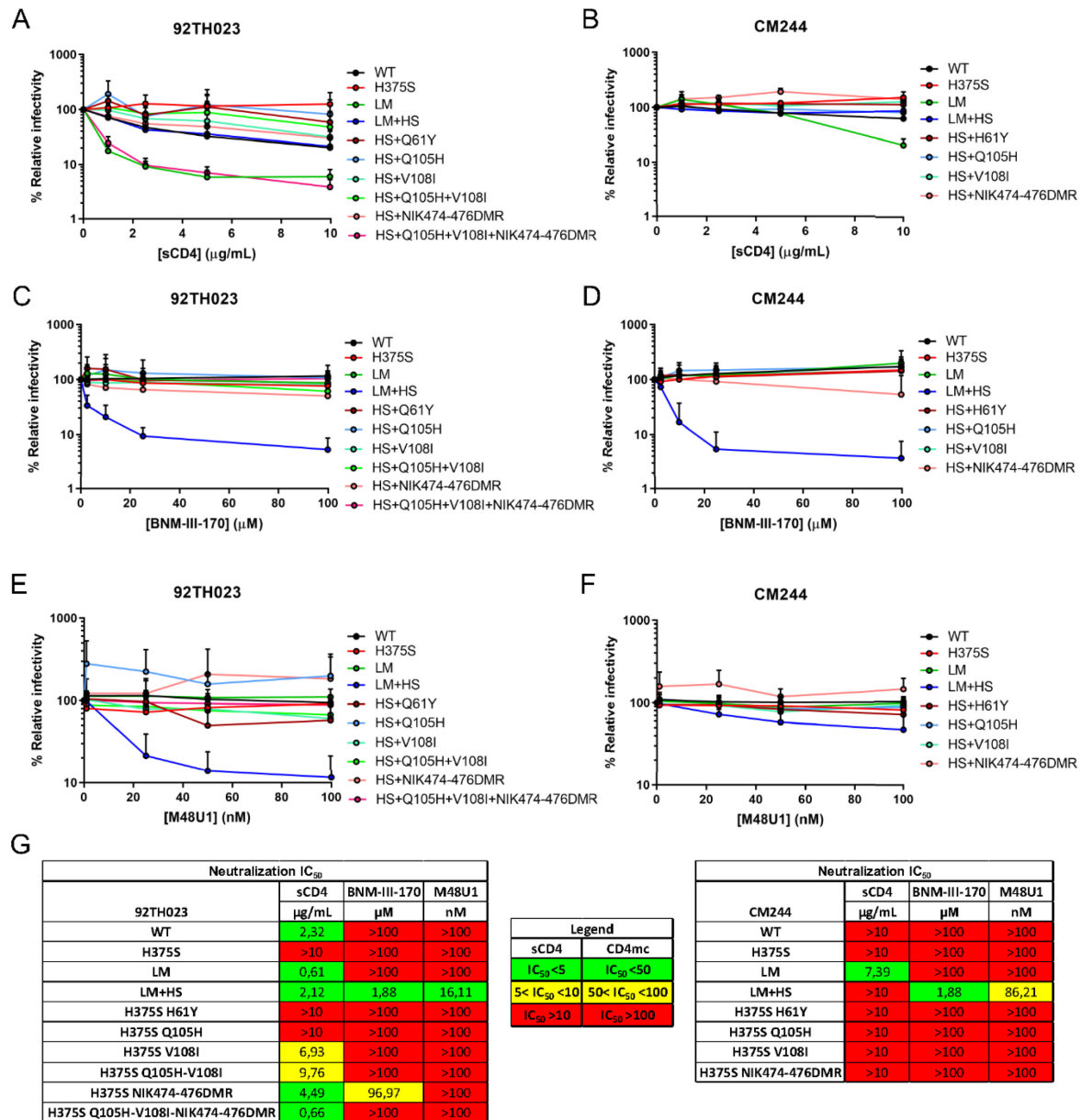


**MCG-III-051**. To a flask charged with **2.11** (42 mg, 0.056 mmol), dimethylamine hydrochloride (91 mg, 1.1 mmol) at room temperature under nitrogen atmosphere was added dichloroethane (2 mL) and ethanol (2 mL). The reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 3 h before addition of sodium cyanoborohydride (7.0 mg, 0.11 mmol). The resulting reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 22 h, then cooled to  $0\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  and quenched with aq. sat.  $\text{NaHCO}_3$  and diluted with  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ . The biphasic solution was then adjusted to pH 10 with aq. 1M  $\text{NaOH}$  and stirred for 30 min. The layers were then separated and the resulting aqueous layer was extracted with  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ . The combined organic layers were washed with aq. sat.  $\text{NaCl}$ , dried over  $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4$ , and concentrated *in vacuo*. The residue was run through a plug of silica gel, eluting with 20:80 hexanes:EtOAc containing 1% triethylamine, then concentrated *in vacuo* and used in the next step without further purification. The residue was taken up in  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$  and cooled to  $0\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  before addition of trifluoroacetic acid (0.09 mL, 0.8 mmol). The solution was stirred for 12 h at room temperature, then cooled to  $0\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  before addition of trifluoroacetic acid (0.05 mL, 0.6 mmol). The solution was stirred at room temperature for 24 h, then concentrated *in vacuo* and taken up in  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$  (80:20) and subjected to HPLC purification. Conditions: eluent  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{CH}_3\text{CN}$  (80:20 to 50:50, linear gradient); flow rate: 15 mL/min; run time: 15 min. Product-containing fractions were combined and the resulting solution was deep-frozen ( $-78\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$  bath) and lyophilized to afford product as a white powder (6 mg, 12% yield from **1.23**).

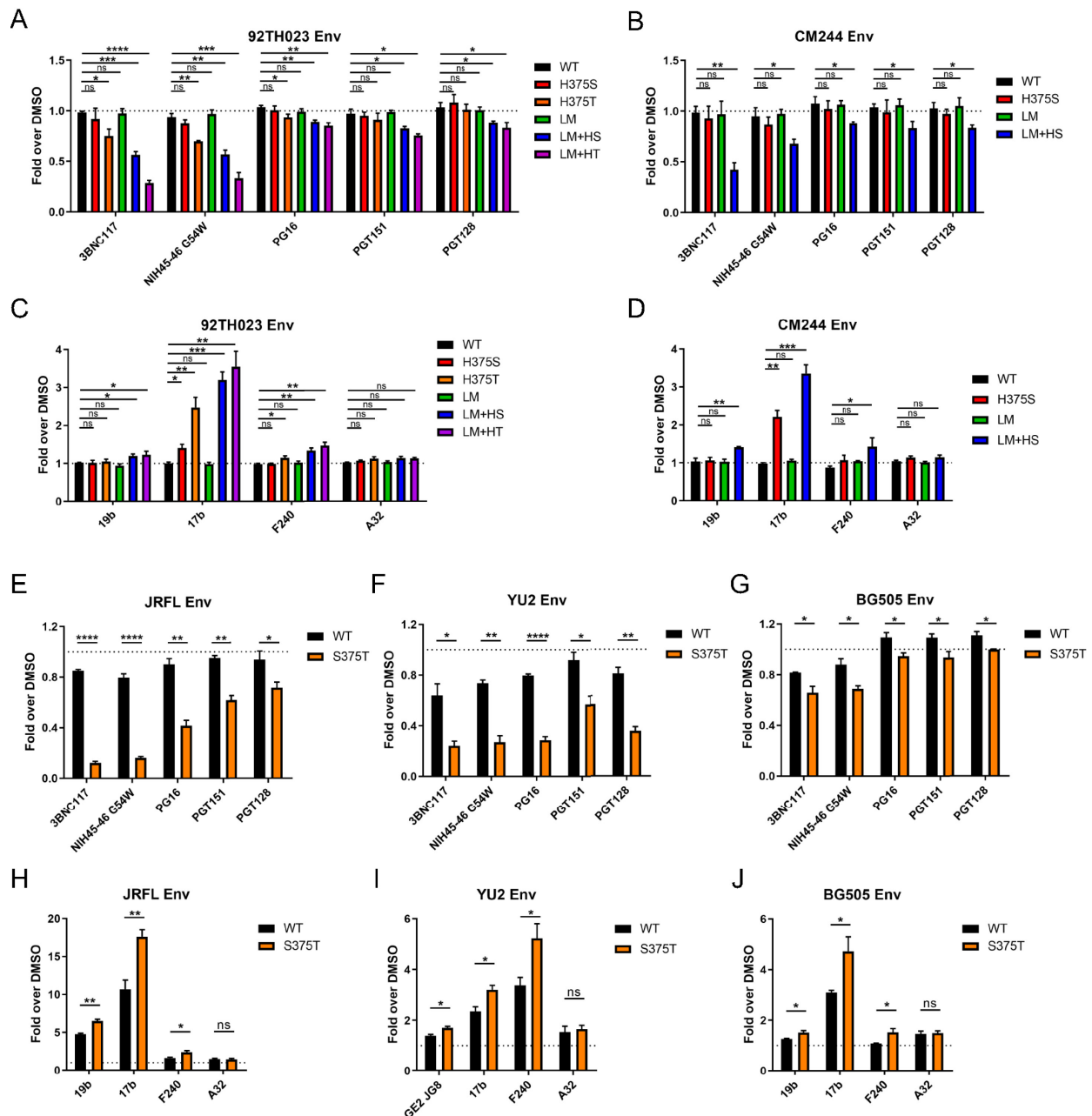
**$^1\text{H}$  NMR** (500 MHz, Acetone- $d_6$ )  $\delta$  10.29 (s, 1H), 9.19 – 9.05 (m, 1H), 7.97 (dd,  $J = 11.6, 2.4$  Hz, 1H), 7.81 (s, 1H), 7.74 – 7.69 (m, 1H), 7.61 (s, 1H), 7.51 (t,  $J = 8.6$  Hz, 1H), 5.73 (dd,  $J = 8.9, 3.3$  Hz, 1H), 4.53 (dd,  $J = 27.9, 13.1$  Hz, 2H), 4.40 (d,  $J = 13.2$  Hz, 2H), 3.64 – 3.47 (m, 2H), 3.44 – 3.29 (m, 1H), 2.99 (s, 2H), 2.81 (dd,  $J = 16.9, 3.9$  Hz, 1H).

**AMM** (ESI)  $m/z$  518.2444 [calcd for  $\text{C}_{25}\text{H}_{34}\text{N}_7\text{O}_2\text{FCl}$  ( $\text{M}-2\text{H}$ )<sup>-</sup> 518.2447]

## 6.2.12 SUPPLEMENTAL FIGURES

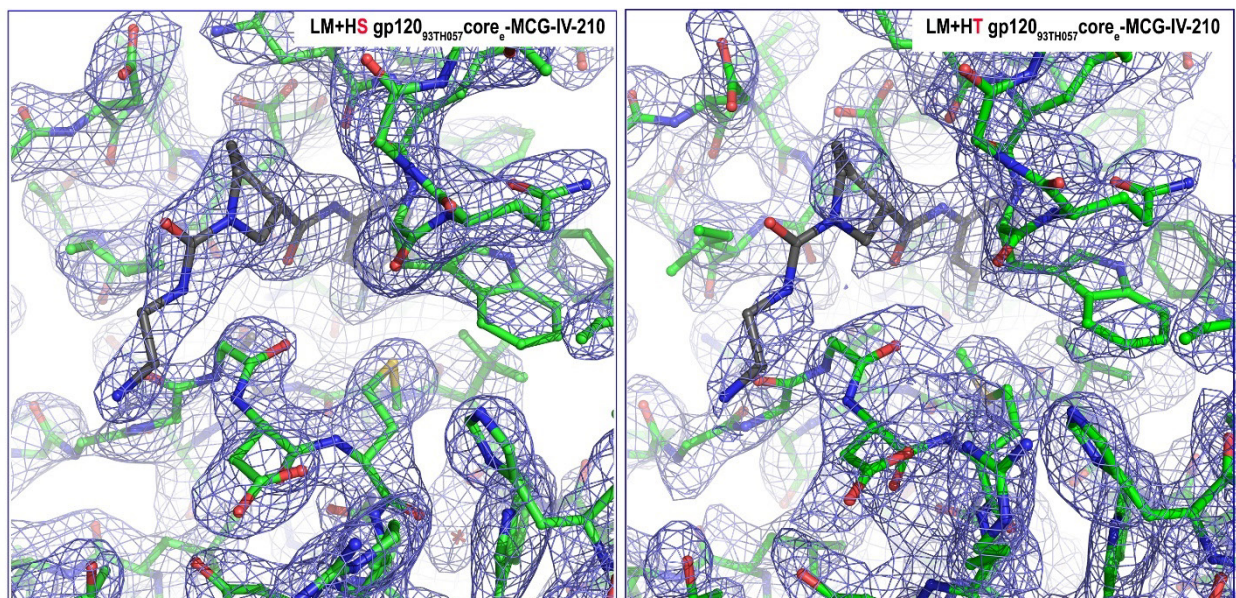


**Figure 6.1.S1 - Effect of single gp120 layer mutations on neutralization by CD4 and CD4mc.** Recombinant HIV-1 strains expressing luciferase and bearing wild-type or mutant CRF01\_AE Envs (92TH023 and CM244 isolates) were normalized by reverse transcriptase activity. Normalized amounts of viruses were incubated with serial dilutions of sCD4 (**A, B**), BNM-III-170 (**C, D**), or M48U1 (**E, F**) at 37°C for 1 h prior to infection of Cf2Th-CD4/CCR5 cells. Infectivity at each dilution of sCD4 or CD4mc tested is shown as the percentage of infection without sCD4 or CD4mc for each particular mutant. Quadruplicate samples were analyzed in each experiment. Data shown are the means of results obtained in at least 3 independent experiments. The error bars represent the standard deviations. Neutralization half maximal inhibitory concentrations (IC<sub>50</sub>) are summarized in (**G**).



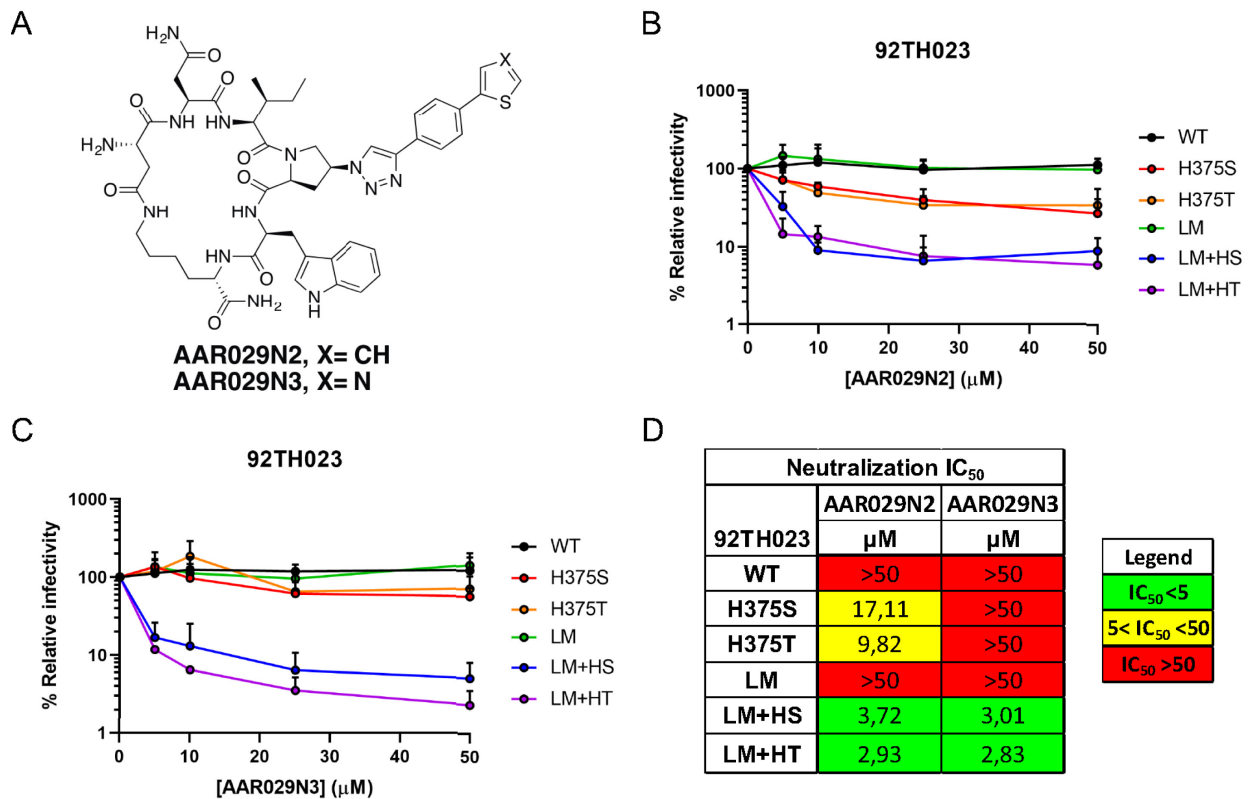
**Figure 6.1.S2 - Phe43 cavity and inner domain changes render the CRF01\_AE HIV-1 strain susceptible to CD4mc-induced Env conformational changes.**

Cell-surface staining of 293T cells transfected with different Env expressors (92TH023, CM244, JRFL, YU2 and BG505 isolates) WT or their mutated counterparts using a panel of Env ligands. Binding of bNAbs (A-B, E-G) and nnAbs (C-D, H-J) was performed in presence of BNM-III-170 (50  $\mu$ M) or not (DMSO). Shown are the mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained in presence of BNM-III-170 normalized to the MFI in absence of BNM-III-170 (DMSO) from the transfected (GFP<sup>+</sup>) population for staining obtained in at least 3 independent experiments. All MFI were normalized to 2G12 MFI for each Env mutants. Error bars indicate mean  $\pm$  SEM. Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t-test (\*,  $P < 0.05$ , \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ , \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ , \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ , ns: non significant).



**Figure 6.1.S3 - Electron density maps of CD4mc in complex with gp120.**

A 2Fo-Fc electron density map contoured at 1σ showing the density around MCG-IV-210 for the LM+HS gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub> (left) and LM+HT gp120<sub>93TH057</sub> core<sub>e</sub> (right). MCG-IV-210 is colored grey and gp120 green. Nitrogens are colored blue and oxygens red.



**Figure 6.1.S4 - Phe43 cavity and inner domain changes enhance the sensitivity of CRF01\_AE strains to neutralization by cPTs.**

(A) Chemical structure of the different cPTs tested. (B-D) Recombinant HIV-1 strains expressing luciferase and bearing wild-type or mutant CRF01\_AE Envs (92TH023 isolate) were normalized by reverse transcriptase activity. Normalized amounts of viruses were incubated with serial dilutions of the cyclic peptide triazoles (cPTs) AAR029N2 (B), or AAR029N3 (C) at 37°C for 1 h prior to infection of Cf2Th-CD4/CCR5 cells. Infectivity at each dilution of cPTs tested is shown as the percentage of infection without cPTs for each particular mutant. Quadruplicate samples were analyzed in each experiment. Data shown are the means of results obtained in at least 3 independent experiments. The error bars represent the standard deviations. Neutralization half maximal inhibitory concentration ( $\text{IC}_{50}$ ) are summarized in (D).

**Table 6.1.S1 - Data collection and refinement statistics**

	LM+HT gp120 <sub>CRF01_AE</sub> core <sup>e</sup>	LM+HS gp120 <sub>CRF01_AE</sub> core <sup>e</sup>	LM+HS gp120 <sub>CRF01_AE</sub> core <sup>e</sup> - BNM-III-170	LM+HS gp120 <sub>CRF01_AE</sub> core <sup>e</sup> - (S)-MCG-IV-210
<b>Data collection</b>				
Wavelength, Å	0.920	1.033	0.979	0.979
Space group	P2 <sub>1</sub> 2 <sub>1</sub> 2 <sub>1</sub>	P2 <sub>1</sub> 2 <sub>1</sub> 2 <sub>1</sub>	P2 <sub>1</sub> 2 <sub>1</sub> 2 <sub>1</sub>	P2 <sub>1</sub> 2 <sub>1</sub> 2 <sub>1</sub>
Cell parameters a, b, c,	66.7, 67.5, 86.8	64.0, 65.6, 87.8	66.8, 66.5, 87.1	65.8, 66.6, 86.2
	90, 90, 90	90, 90, 90	90, 90, 90	90, 90, 90
α, β, γ, °	1	1	1	1
Complexes/a.u.	50-2.5 (2.56-2.5)	50-2.2 (2.24-2.2)	50-2.65 (2.79-2.65)	50-2.5 (2.54-2.5)
Resolution, (Å)				
	55,245	59,449	32,067	38,658
# of reflections	13,726	17,485	10,207	10,448
Total	16.5 (89.6)	11.3 (85.6)	13.3 (89.9)	11.8 (100)
Unique	— (—)	6.7 (59.8)	8.2 (57.1)	6.0 (60.0)
R <sub>merge</sub> <sup>a</sup> , %	0.98 (0.70)	0.99 (0.61)	0.99 (0.49)	0.97 (0.59)
R <sub>pim</sub> <sup>b</sup> , %	6.1 (1.0)	14.3 (0.8)	3.9 (0.8)	14.5 (0.8)
CC <sub>1/2</sub> <sup>c</sup>				
I/σ	96.7 (62.3)	88.0 (66.6)	88.6 (90.0)	76.5 (81.2)
Completeness, %	4.0 (3.2)	3.4 (2.5)	3.1 (3.2)	3.7 (3.5)
Redundancy				
<b>Refinement Statistics</b>				
Resolution, Å	50.0 – 2.5	50.0 – 2.2	50.0 – 2.65	50.0 – 2.5
R <sup>d</sup> %	26.3	22.8	20.2	24.6
R <sub>free</sub> <sup>e</sup> , %	30.5	27.0	26.2	30.0
# of atoms				
Protein	2,674	2,668	2,651	2,673
Water	46	33	24	3
Ligand/Ion	155	155	186	178
Overall B value (Å) <sup>2</sup>				
Protein	45	64	49	61
Water	40	54	46	58
Ligand/Ion	59	82	65	67
RMSD <sup>f</sup>				
Bond lengths, Å	0.006	0.006	0.006	0.007
Bond angles, °	1.0	0.9	0.83	0.95
Ramachandran <sup>g</sup>				
favored, %	92.8	97.0	94.9	94.9
allowed, %	6.6	3.0	4.8	5.1
outliers, %	0.6	0.0	0.3	0.0
<b>PDB ID</b>	<b>6UTB</b>	<b>6UTD</b>	<b>6UT1</b>	<b>6USW</b>

Values in parentheses are for highest-resolution shell

<sup>a</sup>R<sub>merge</sub> =  $\sum |I - \langle I \rangle| / \sum I$ , where  $I$  is the observed intensity and  $\langle I \rangle$  is the average intensity obtained from multiple observations of symmetry-related reflections after rejections

<sup>b</sup>R<sub>pim</sub> = as defined in (Weiss. *J Appl Cryst* 2001)

<sup>c</sup>CC<sub>1/2</sub> = as defined by (Karplus and Diederichs. *Science* 2012)

<sup>d</sup>R =  $\sum ||F_o| - |F_c|| / \sum |F_o|$ , where  $F_o$  and  $F_c$  are the observed and calculated structure factors, respectively

<sup>e</sup>R<sub>free</sub> = as defined by (Brünger. *Methods in Enzymology* 1997)

<sup>f</sup>RMSD = Root mean square deviation

<sup>g</sup>Calculated with MolProbity

## **ARTICLE 11**

**L'expression de BST-2 module la capacité des mimétiques moléculaires de CD4 à sensibiliser les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 à la réponse ADCC**

***BST-2 Expression Modulates Small CD4-Mimetic Sensitization of HIV-1-Infected Cells to Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity***

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**Contribution des auteurs:**

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### 6.3.1 RÉSUMÉ

Il a été démontré que les anticorps reconnaissant les épitopes conservés induits par CD4 (CD4i) de l'Env du virus de l'immunodéficience humaine de type 1 (VIH-1) et capables de médier la réponse cytotoxique cellulaire dépendante des anticorps (ADCC) sont présents dans le sérum de la plupart des individus infectés par le VIH-1. Ces anticorps reconnaissent préférentiellement Env dans sa conformation liée à CD4. La régulation négative de CD4 par Nef et Vpu réduit considérablement l'exposition des épitopes CD4i de l'Env du VIH-1 et, par conséquent, réduit aussi la susceptibilité des cellules infectées par le VIH-1 à l'ADCC médiée par le sérum de personnes séropositives (sérum VIH<sup>+</sup>). Il est important de noter que ce mécanisme d'évasion immunitaire peut être contourné à l'aide de mimétiques moléculaires de CD4 (CD4mc) qui sont capables de faire passer Env dans la conformation liée à CD4 et de sensibiliser les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 à l'ADCC médiée par les sérums VIH<sup>+</sup>. Cependant, le VIH-1 a développé des mécanismes supplémentaires pour éviter l'ADCC, notamment l'antagonisme de BST-2 médié par Vpu, qui diminue la quantité globale d'Env présente à la surface des cellules. En conséquence, il a été démontré que la régulation à la hausse de la BST-2 en réponse à l'interféron alpha (IFN- $\alpha$ ) augmente la susceptibilité des cellules infectées par le VIH-1 à l'ADCC malgré l'activité de Vpu. Nous montrons ici que la régulation à la hausse de BST-2 par l'IFN- $\beta$  et l'interleukine-27 (IL-27) augmente également l'expression de surface d'Env et augmente ainsi la capacité des CD4mc à sensibiliser les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 à l'ADCC par des sérums provenant de personnes infectées par le VIH-1.

### 6.3.2 ABSTRACT

Antibodies recognizing conserved CD4-induced (CD4i) epitopes on human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1) Env and able to mediate antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) have been shown to be present in sera from most HIV-1-infected individuals. These antibodies preferentially recognize Env in its CD4-bound conformation. CD4 downregulation by Nef and Vpu dramatically reduces exposure of CD4i HIV-1 Env epitopes and therefore reduce the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC mediated by HIV-positive (HIV<sup>+</sup>) sera. Importantly, this mechanism of immune evasion can be circumvented with small-molecule CD4 mimetics (CD4mc) that are able to transition Env into the CD4-bound conformation and sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. However, HIV-1 developed

additional mechanisms to avoid ADCC, including Vpu-mediated BST-2 antagonism, which decreases the overall amount of Env present at the cell surface. Accordingly, BST-2 upregulation in response to alpha interferon (IFN- $\alpha$ ) was shown to increase the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC despite the activity of Vpu. Here we show that BST-2 upregulation by IFN- $\beta$  and interleukin-27 (IL-27) also increases the surface expression of Env and thus boosts the ability of CD4mc to sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC by sera from HIV-1-infected individuals.

### 6.3.3 IMPORTANCE

HIV-1 evolved sophisticated strategies to conceal Env epitopes from ADCC-mediating antibodies present in HIV sera. Vpu-mediated BST-2 downregulation was shown to decrease ADCC responses by limiting the amount of Env present at the cell surface. This effect of Vpu was shown to be attenuated by IFN- treatment. Here we show that in addition to IFN-, IFN- and IL-27 also affect Vpu-mediated BST-2 downregulation and greatly enhance ADCC responses against HIV-1-infected cells in the presence of CD4mc. These findings may inform strategies aimed at HIV prevention and eradication.

### 6.3.4 INTRODUCTION

Antibodies that preferentially recognize the CD4-bound conformation of human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1) envelope glycoproteins (Env) can eliminate HIV-1-infected cells through antibody-dependent cellular cytotoxicity (ADCC) responses ([1–4](#)). These antibodies are present in serum ([1](#), [5](#)), breast milk ([5](#)), and cervicovaginal lavage fluid ([2](#), [5](#)) samples from HIV-1-infected individuals and have been proposed to be part of the pressure exerted on HIV-1 to efficiently downregulate CD4 from the cell surface ([6](#)). Accordingly, Nef- and Vpu-mediated CD4 downregulation conceal the exposure of Env epitopes recognized by these antibodies ([1](#), [3](#), [7](#)). In addition, HIV-1 decreases ADCC responses by diminishing the overall amount of Env present at the cell surface. This is achieved through Vpu-mediated BST-2 (tetherin/CD317/HM1.24) downregulation ([7–9](#)), which allows for efficient release of viral particles ([10](#), [11](#)), and also through efficient Env internalization mediated by an endocytosis motif in the cytoplasmic tail of gp41 ([12](#)).

A better understanding of the importance that the CD4-bound conformation of HIV-1 envelope glycoproteins has on ADCC responses prompted us to “force” this Env conformation on the surface of infected cells using small-molecule CD4 mimetics (CD4mc). CD4mc induction of the CD4-bound conformation results in enhanced recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by serum, breast milk, and cervicovaginal fluid samples from HIV-1-infected subjects. Most importantly, CD4mc sensitizes HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC responses mediated by these biological fluids ([4](#), [5](#), [13](#)).

The effect of CD4mc on ADCC responses may be influenced by the amount of Env available at the cell surface. Only limited amounts of Env are presented at the cell surface due to efficient Env internalization ([12](#)) and Vpu-mediated BST-2 downregulation ([7–9](#)); this places an upper limit on the amount of Env that can be rendered susceptible to ADCC by CD4mc. Interestingly, two BST-2 isoforms possessing distinct biological properties have been described ([14](#), [15](#)). While the long isoform of BST-2 (L-BST-2) contains a cytoplasmic tyrosine motif mediating endocytic recycling, sensitivity to HIV-1 M Vpu and innate immune sensing, the short isoform of BST-2 (S-BST-2) lacks this motif due to the utilization of an alternative start codon ([14](#), [15](#)). How these two isoforms modulate Env recognition on the surface of HIV-1-infected cells by HIV-positive (HIV<sup>+</sup>) sera and how this affects the activity of CD4mc remain unknown.

Type I interferons (IFNs) are an important part of the early host immune response observed during acute HIV-1 infection ([16](#)). The antiviral effect exerted by IFN is highlighted by the observation that transmitted/founder HIV-1 strains that initiate host infection have been shown to be more resistant to type I IFN responses than HIV-1 strains found during the chronic phase of infection ([17–19](#)). Furthermore, Vpu enhances viral replication particularly during early stages of infection, probably by counteracting the IFN-inducible restriction factor BST-2 ([18](#), [20](#)). The induction of BST-2 expression by type I IFN treatment was also shown to sensitize infected cells to ADCC ([8](#)). In addition, interleukin-27 (IL-27) also enhances BST-2 levels on the surface of human monocytes and CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells ([21](#)). IL-27 is a member of the IL-12 family of cytokines and drives the differentiation of Th1 CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells ([22](#), [23](#)). Interestingly, IL-27 induces an antiviral gene expression profile similar to that induced by alpha interferon (IFN- $\alpha$ ), including the *apobec3g* gene ([24](#)). Furthermore, IL-27 inhibited the replication of HIV-1 in cultures of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T

cells and monocytes/macrophages through the induction of APOBEC (apolipoprotein B mRNA-editing, enzyme-catalytic, polypeptide-like) proteins (24, 25). Notably, IL-27-mediated BST-2 upregulation was shown to be independent from type I IFN responses (21). However, the effect of IL-27 on ADCC responses during viral infection has not been determined.

Here we evaluated the role of BST-2 on Env accumulation on the surface of HIV-1-infected cells and tested whether type I IFNs or IL-27 could be exploited in conjunction with CD4mc to further enhance ADCC responses mediated by HIV-positive (HIV<sup>+</sup>) sera.

### 6.3.5 RESULTS

#### **BST-2 expression modulates Env accumulation on the surface of HIV-1-infected cells and its recognition by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera in the presence of CD4mc.**

In the absence of Vpu, Env accumulates at the plasma membrane of HIV-1-infected cells (7–9) in large part due to the inhibitory effects of BST-2 on virus release (10, 11). This surface accumulation results in increased susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC (7–9). To further evaluate the role of BST-2 on Env surface expression, we infected Jurkat cell lines expressing no BST-2 (Jurkat Tag) or expressing the long isoform of BST-2 (Jurkat Tag L-BST-2) or the short isoform of BST-2 (Jurkat Tag S-BST-2) (15). Cells were infected with the transmitted/founder virus CH58 (CH58 TF) (5) expressing the Vpu accessory protein (wild-type [wt] CH58 TF) or containing a *vpu* deletion (Vpu-). Forty-eight hours postinfection, BST-2 and Env levels were evaluated by cell surface staining followed by intracellular p24 staining to identify infected (p24-positive [p24<sup>+</sup>]) cells. As expected, while BST-2 was not detected on the surface of Jurkat Tag cells (Fig. 6.2.1A and D), it was equivalently detected on the surface of uninfected (mock) Jurkat Tag L-BST-2 and S-BST-2 cells, indicating that these two cell lines express similar levels of BST-2 (Fig. 6.2.1B to D). However, in agreement with previous reports, HIV-1 infection significantly decreased expression of L-BST-2 but not that of S-BST-2. The S-BST-2 isoform lacks 12 residues of the cytoplasmic tail required for Vpu group M-mediated BST-2 endosomal degradation (14, 15) (Fig. 6.2.1C and D). As expected, a virus lacking Vpu (Vpu-) was unable to decrease cell surface levels of BST-2 (Fig. 6.2.1B to D).

When we evaluated Env levels on the surface of infected cells with the conformation-independent 2G12 antibody (**Fig. 6.2.2A**), we observed a significant correlation with BST-2 levels (**Fig. 6.2.2B**). This supports previous observations indicating that BST-2 modulates the overall amount of Env on the surfaces of infected cells ([7](#), [8](#)). We then assessed whether enhanced accumulation of Env affected recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. Despite different amounts of BST-2 and Env present on the surface of Jurkat cell lines expressing S-BST-2, L-BST-2, or no BST-2, cells infected with a wild-type virus were barely recognized by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 6.2.2C**). This is believed to reflect the ability of HIV-1 to downregulate CD4 in infected cells such that only closed Env trimers remain ([1](#), [3](#), [5](#), [7](#), [26](#)). Antibodies present in HIV<sup>+</sup> sera preferentially recognize Env in its CD4-bound conformation ([1](#), [27](#)). Infection with a *vpu*<sup>-</sup> virus led to a small increase in recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 6.2.2C**). In order to expose epitopes recognized by antibodies present in HIV<sup>+</sup> sera, infected cells were incubated in parallel with the potent CD4mc BNM-III-170 which forces Env to adopt a CD4-bound-like conformation ([4](#), [28](#)) and in conjunction with coreceptor binding site antibodies (CoRBS) efficiently expose anti-cluster A epitopes ([4](#)). CD4mc addition enhanced recognition of all three infected cell lines (**Fig. 6.2.2C**). In agreement with decreased sensitivity of S-BST-2 to Vpu-mediated downregulation, Jurkat Tag S-BST-2 cells infected with a wild-type virus responded significantly better to CD4mc than Jurkat Tag L-BST-2 cells infected with the same virus. This likely results from an enhanced Env accumulation on the surfaces of Jurkat Tag S-BST-2 cells due to the inability of Vpu to downregulate S-BST-2 (**Fig. 6.2.2A and C**). Likely due to the absence of BST-2 in the Jurkat Tag empty vector (EV) cell line, infection with a *vpu*<sup>-</sup> virus has a minor effect on Env levels (as evaluated by 2G12) and therefore recognition of infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera in the absence of CD4mc. Infection with a *Vpu*<sup>-</sup> virus of Jurkat Tag S-BST-2 and L cells led to a slightly better recognition of infected cells in the absence of CD4mc. Upon addition of CD4mc, however, all infected cells were significantly better recognized by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. This finding confirms previous observations indicating that antibodies present in HIV<sup>+</sup> sera preferentially recognize Env in the CD4-bound conformation ([1](#)). Of note, the difference in HIV<sup>+</sup> serum recognition in the presence of CD4mc between wild-type and *vpu*<sup>-</sup> virus infected cells was higher in Jurkat L-BST-2 cells that express the BST-2 isoform susceptible to Vpu action (**Fig. 6.2.2C**). Accumulation of Env (as measured by 2G12) correlated significantly with recognition of infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig.**

**6.2.2D).** Recognition of infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera also correlated with BST-2 expression (**Fig. 6.2.2E**).

### **BST-2 levels regulate Env accumulation and its recognition by HIV sera on the surface of HIV-1-infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells.**

Figures 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 showed that BST-2 levels, and its sensitivity to Vpu downregulation, dictated Env accumulation on the surfaces of HIV-1-infected cell lines. Moreover, Env accumulation on the surfaces of infected cells increased the amount of Env available to engage CD4mc and henceforth sample the CD4-bound conformation, which is preferentially recognized by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera ([1](#), [27](#)). IFN- $\alpha$  treatment has been shown to enhance BST-2 levels, resulting in an accumulation of Env on the surfaces of HIV-1-infected cells and thus increasing the sensitivity of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC ([8](#)). Similar observations were recently reported ([29](#)). Therefore, we decided to take advantage of the type 1 interferon responsiveness of BST-2 ([10](#), [11](#)). Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from healthy HIV-1 uninfected individuals were mock infected or infected with HIV-1 (CH58 TF), and BST-2 levels were modulated by stimulation with type 1 IFNs (IFN- $\alpha$  and IFN- $\beta$ ) or with IL-27 ([21](#)). As expected, BST-2 levels were significantly higher in uninfected than HIV-1-infected cells. Interestingly, IFN- $\alpha$ , IFN- $\beta$ , and IL-27 treatment enhanced BST-2 detection in both uninfected and HIV-1-infected cells (**Fig. 6.2.3A**). BST-2 upregulation resulted in Env accumulation on the surfaces of infected cells, as measured with the 2G12 antibody (**Fig. 6.2.3B**).

We then evaluated whether IFN- $\alpha$ , IFN- $\beta$ , and IL-27 treatment enhanced recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. Despite a significant increase in Env accumulation on the surfaces of infected cells (**Fig. 6.2.3B**), treatment with IFN- $\beta$  and IL-27 failed to enhance recognition of infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera, and the effect of IFN- $\alpha$  treatment was relatively minor (**Fig. 6.2.4**). However, addition of the CD4mc BNM-III-170 significantly increased recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera; these results are in agreement with previous reports demonstrating the ability of HIV<sup>+</sup> sera to recognize CD4i epitopes on primary HIV-1 Env that are not spontaneously exposed ([1](#), [3](#)) and the capacity of CD4mc to promote the CD4-bound conformation of Env on the surfaces of HIV-1-infected cells ([4](#), [5](#), [13](#), [30](#)). Remarkably, the

combination of IFN- $\alpha$ , IFN- $\beta$ , or IL-27 with BNM-III-170 further increased recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by all sera tested compared to any one of these treatments (**Fig. 6.2.4**).

### **BST-2 upregulation boosts the capacity of CD4mc to sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera.**

To evaluate whether the enhanced recognition of HIV-1-infected cells induced by the combination of IFN- $\alpha$ , IFN- $\beta$ , and IL-27 treatments and BNM-III-170 would result in enhanced ADCC killing, we infected primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells with HIV-1 CH58 TF and evaluated their susceptibility to ADCC mediated by autologous peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) using a previously described fluorescence-activated cell sorting (FACS)-based assay ([5](#), [31](#)). As reported ([5](#), [13](#)), CD4mc BNM-III-170 significantly increased ADCC mediated by all HIV<sup>+</sup> sera tested (**Fig. 6.2.5**). In agreement with the recognition of infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (**Fig. 6.2.4**), IFN- $\alpha$  treatment alone had a minor but significant effect on ADCC responses (**Fig. 6.2.5**), but IFN- $\beta$  and IL-27 treatment failed to do so (**Fig. 6.2.5**). Remarkably, addition of BNM-III-170 further enhanced the susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC for cells treated with IFN- $\alpha$ , IFN- $\beta$ , or IL-27 (**Fig. 6.2.5**). As expected, enhanced recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera positively correlated with enhanced ADCC responses (**Fig. 6.2.6**). These results highlight the potential of combining type I IFNs and IL-27 with CD4mc to sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC.

### **6.3.6 DISCUSSION**

Increasing evidence suggests that Fc $\gamma$  receptor-dependent functions of antibodies play a role in controlling human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1) infection and replication ([32–40](#)). Analysis of the correlates of protection in the RV144 vaccine trial suggested that decreased HIV-1 acquisition was linked to increased ADCC activity in protected vaccinees ([41](#)). ADCC-mediating antibodies (Abs) targeting anti-cluster A epitopes were isolated from some RV144 vaccinees ([42](#)) and were shown to preferentially recognize the HIV-1 envelope glycoproteins sampling the CD4-bound conformation ([7](#)). CD4i antibodies represent a significant portion of the anti-Env Abs elicited during natural HIV-1 infection ([1](#), [27](#), [43](#)). This elicitation of CD4i Abs could result from transitional exposure of CD4i Env epitope during viral entry ([44](#)) or, most likely, after binding of shed gp120 with CD4 on uninfected bystander cells ([30](#)). However, not all CD4i antibodies are able to mediate ADCC against HIV-1-infected cells. While anti-cluster A antibodies



have been shown to mediate potent ADCC responses against infected cells exposing Env in the CD4-bound conformation (3, 4, 7, 45), CD4i antibodies targeting the coreceptor binding site appear to be unable to do so (3, 4, 45, 46). While the reasons for these differences are not fully understood, the angle of approach of the antibody toward Env might differentially expose the Fc region which must be engaged by the Fc $\gamma$  receptor in order to activate effector cells. Nevertheless, to limit the exposure of anti-cluster A epitopes that are exposed in the CD4-bound conformation of Env at the surface of infected cells, HIV-1 evolved sophisticated mechanisms to efficiently internalize Env (12) to counteract the host restriction factor BST-2 with the viral Vpu protein (7–9) and to downregulate CD4 by Nef and Vpu (1, 7). The requirement to evade ADCC provides one plausible explanation of why the vast majority of circulating HIV-1 strains worldwide express functional Nef and Vpu proteins, which limit the exposure of CD4i Env epitopes on the surfaces of infected cells.

In agreement with the necessity for HIV-1 to avoid exposing the CD4-bound conformation of Env, we recently showed that forcing Env to adopt this conformation with CD4mc sensitizes HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC by sera from HIV-1-infected subjects (5). Here we show that increasing the amounts on Env at the cell surface, once this Env is induced by CD4mc to adopt the CD4-bound conformation, results in increased recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera. We found that enhanced recognition of infected cells by HIV sera translates into enhanced susceptibility of infected cells to ADCC. This was achieved by exploiting the type 1 interferon responsiveness of the restriction factor BST-2, known to trap mature viral particles on the surfaces of infected cells. IFN- $\alpha$  and - $\beta$  enhance BST-2 levels on the surfaces of infected cells, which translates into enhanced levels of Env potentially able to be targeted by ADCC after engaging the CD4mc. Interestingly, similar results were obtained using IL-27, a cytokine known to modulate BST-2 levels in an IFN-independent manner. Altogether, our results suggest a model (Fig. 6.2.7) where the conformation and availability of Env at the cell surface dictates the sensitivity of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC. HIV-1 limits the amount of Env present at the cell surface and tightly controls its conformation. By preventing Env from assuming the CD4-bound conformation, HIV-1 avoids Env recognition by CD4i ADCC-mediating Abs present in the sera of the majority of HIV-1-infected individuals. Small CD4mc sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC by forcing Env to expose CD4i anti-cluster A-mediating epitopes. IFN- $\alpha$ , IFN- $\beta$ , and IL-27 treatment, through

upregulation of BST-2, increases the total amounts of Env available for CD4mc to induce ADCC-susceptible Env conformations at the surface of infected cells. While HIV-1-infected cells are protected from ADCC responses, we recently demonstrated that uninfected bystander CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells bind gp120 shed from productively infected cells and are efficiently recognized by ADCC-mediating antibodies (30). Importantly, we also demonstrated that this phenomenon can be blocked by CD4mc that abrogates the binding of gp120 to uninfected cells and effectively redirects the immune system to infected cells. Therefore, the combination of CD4mc and type I IFN or IL-27 would represent an effective strategy to specifically target and eliminate HIV-1-infected cells by ADCC.

Robust type I interferon responses are among the earliest host immune defenses observed during acute HIV-1 infection (16). Accordingly, transmitted/founder viruses, including those used in the present study, were found to be more resistant to IFN treatment than viruses from chronic HIV-1 infection (17–19). In that context, Vpu counteraction of BST-2 was recently identified as a major determinant of this IFN resistance (18, 20) and was found to play a crucial role in enhancing virus replication and release in human CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells, particularly in the presence of IFN (18). Here we found that IFN- $\alpha$ , IFN- $\beta$ , or IL-27 treatment enhanced BST-2 levels and, in combination with CD4mc, similarly sensitized HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC. However, there are many other IFN- $\alpha$  subtypes, and some of them inhibit HIV-1 replication more efficiently in vitro and in animal models than IFN- $\alpha$ 2 (47, 48). Thus, it will be important to evaluate to what extent the different IFN- $\alpha$  subtypes sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC in the presence of CD4mc.

CD4mc were recently shown to enhance the viral neutralization and ADCC activities of antibodies elicited in nonhuman primates (NHP) by several different Env immunogens (49), suggesting that combining a vaccine with a small-molecule CD4mc, administered orally or in a microbicide formulation, might be useful as a prophylactic strategy against HIV-1 transmission. Interestingly, mucosal application of IFN- $\beta$  protected macaques from intrarectal and intravaginal simian-human immunodeficiency virus (SHIV) challenges (50). Similarly, IFN- $\alpha$ 2 treatment of rhesus macaques prevented systemic infection by simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV) (51). Whereas a combination of IFNs or IL-27 with CD4mc might further limit HIV-1 transmission or help decrease the size of the viral reservoir in HIV-1-infected individuals remains to be evaluated,

our results support performing future experiments aimed at evaluating whether sensitization of HIV-infected cells to ADCC could affect viral transmission and/or replication in animal models.

## 6.3.7 MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Cell lines and isolation of primary cells

HEK293T human embryonic kidney (obtained from ATCC) and primary cells were grown as previously described ([7](#), [52](#)). Peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) were obtained by leukapheresis. All participants provided informed written consent prior to enrollment in accordance with Institutional Review Board approval. CD4 T lymphocytes were purified from resting PBMCs by negative selection and activated as previously described ([5](#)). Jurkat Tag cells stably expressing the long isoform of BST-2 (L-BST-2) or the short isoform of BST-2 (S-BST-2) and the Jurkat Tag empty vector (EV) cell line expressing no BST-2 were previously described ([15](#)).

### Viral production, infections, and detection of infected cells

In order to achieve the same level of infection between wild-type (wt) and Vpu viruses, vesicular stomatitis virus G (VSVG)-pseudotyped HIV-1 replicating competent viruses were produced. Briefly, proviral vectors and a VSVG-encoding plasmid were co-transfected in 293T cells by standard calcium phosphate transfection. Two days after transfection, cell supernatants were harvested, clarified by low-speed centrifugation (5 min at 1,500 rpm), and concentrated by ultracentrifugation for 1 h at 4°C at  $100,605 \times g$  over a 20% sucrose cushion. Pellets were resuspended in fresh RPMI 1640 medium, and aliquots were stored at -80°C until use ([1](#)). Viruses were then used to infect Jurkat Tag cell lines or primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells from healthy donors by spin infection at  $800 \times g$  for 1 h in 96-well plates at 25°C.

### CD4 mimetic, type I IFN, or IL-27 treatments

The CD4mc BNM-III-170 was synthesized as described previously ([28](#)). BNM-III-170 was dissolved in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) at a stock concentration of 10 mM, aliquoted, and stored at 20°C. BNM-III-170 was then diluted to 50  $\mu$ M in phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) for cell surface staining or in complete RPMI 1640 medium for ADCC assays. IFN- $\alpha$  (PBL Assay Science) was reconstituted in complete RPMI 1640 medium at  $1 \times 10^7$  U/ml, aliquoted, and stored at 80°C. IFN- $\alpha$  was then added to the cells at 1,000 U/ml. IFN- $\beta$  (Rebif; EMD Serono Inc.) ([19](#)) was added to the cells at 1 ng/ml. IL-27 (R&D Systems) was reconstituted at 100  $\mu$ g/ml in sterile

PBS containing 0.1% bovine serum albumin and stored at -80°C. IL-27 was then added to the cells at 100 ng/mL. Type I IFN or IL-27 was added to the cells 24 h post-infection, 24 h before cell surface staining or ADCC assays.

### **Antibodies and sera**

The following antibodies (Abs) were used as the primary Abs for cell surface staining: 5 µg/ml of human anti-HIV-1 Env monoclonal antibody (mAb) 2G12 (National Institutes of Health [NIH] AIDS and Research and Reference Reagent Program), 2 µg/ml rabbit anti-BST-2 Ab (sc-99191; Santa Cruz), or sera from HIV-1-infected individuals (1:1,000 dilution), whereas 1 µg/ml of either Alexa Fluor 647-labeled goat anti-human mAbs (Invitrogen, San Diego, CA, USA) or Brilliant Violet 421-labeled donkey anti-rabbit mAbs (Biolegend, San Diego, CA, USA) were used as secondary Abs, and AquaVivid (Invitrogen, San Diego, CA, USA) was used as a viability dye. All sera were heat inactivated for 30 min at 56°C and stored at 4°C until ready to use in subsequent experiments. Written informed consent was obtained from all study participants (the Montreal Primary HIV Infection Cohort [[53](#), [54](#)] and the Canadian Cohort of HIV Infected Slow Progressors [[55–57](#)]), and research adhered to the ethical guidelines of Centre de Recherche du CHUM (CRCHUM) and was reviewed and approved by the CRCHUM institutional review board (ethics committee). A random-number generator (QuickCalcs; GraphPad) was used to randomly select a number of sera for experiments.

### **Plasmids**

The plasmid encoding the HIV-1 transmitted founder (T/F) CH58 was previously described ([5](#), [17](#), [58–60](#)).

### **Flow cytometry analysis of cell surface staining and ADCC responses**

Cell surface staining was performed as previously described ([1](#), [5](#)). Binding of HIV-1-infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera, anti-Env mAbs (2G12) or anti-BST-2 mAbs was performed 48 h after infection, 24 h after treatment with type I IFNs or IL-27, in the presence or absence of BNM-III-170 (50 µM) or an equivalent volume of vehicle (DMSO). Detection of p24 infected cells was performed as described previously ([5](#)). The percentage of infected cells (p24<sup>+</sup> cells) was determined by gating the living cell population based on the viability dye staining (Aqua Vivid;

Invitrogen). Samples were analyzed on a LSRII cytometer (BD Biosciences, Mississauga, ON, Canada), and data analysis was performed using FlowJo vX.0.7 (Tree Star, Ashland, OR, USA).

Measurement of ADCC-mediated killing was performed with a previously described assay (5). Briefly, primary CD4 T cells infected for 48 h and treated for 24 h with type I IFNs or IL-27 or not treated with type I IFNs or IL-27 were incubated with autologous PBMCs (effector/target cell ratio of 10:1) in the presence or absence of HIV<sup>+</sup> sera (1:1,000), in the presence of CD4mc BNM-III-170 (50  $\mu$ M), or with an equivalent volume of vehicle (DMSO). The percentage of cytotoxicity was calculated as described previously (5).

### **Statistical analyses**

Statistics were analyzed using GraphPad Prism version 6.0.1 (GraphPad, San Diego, CA, USA). Every data set was tested for statistical normality, and this information was used to apply the appropriate (parametric or nonparametric) statistical test. P values of < 0.05 were considered significant; significance values are indicated as follows: \*, P < 0.05; \*\*, P < 0.01, \*\*\*, P < 0.001; \*\*\*\*, P < 0.0001.

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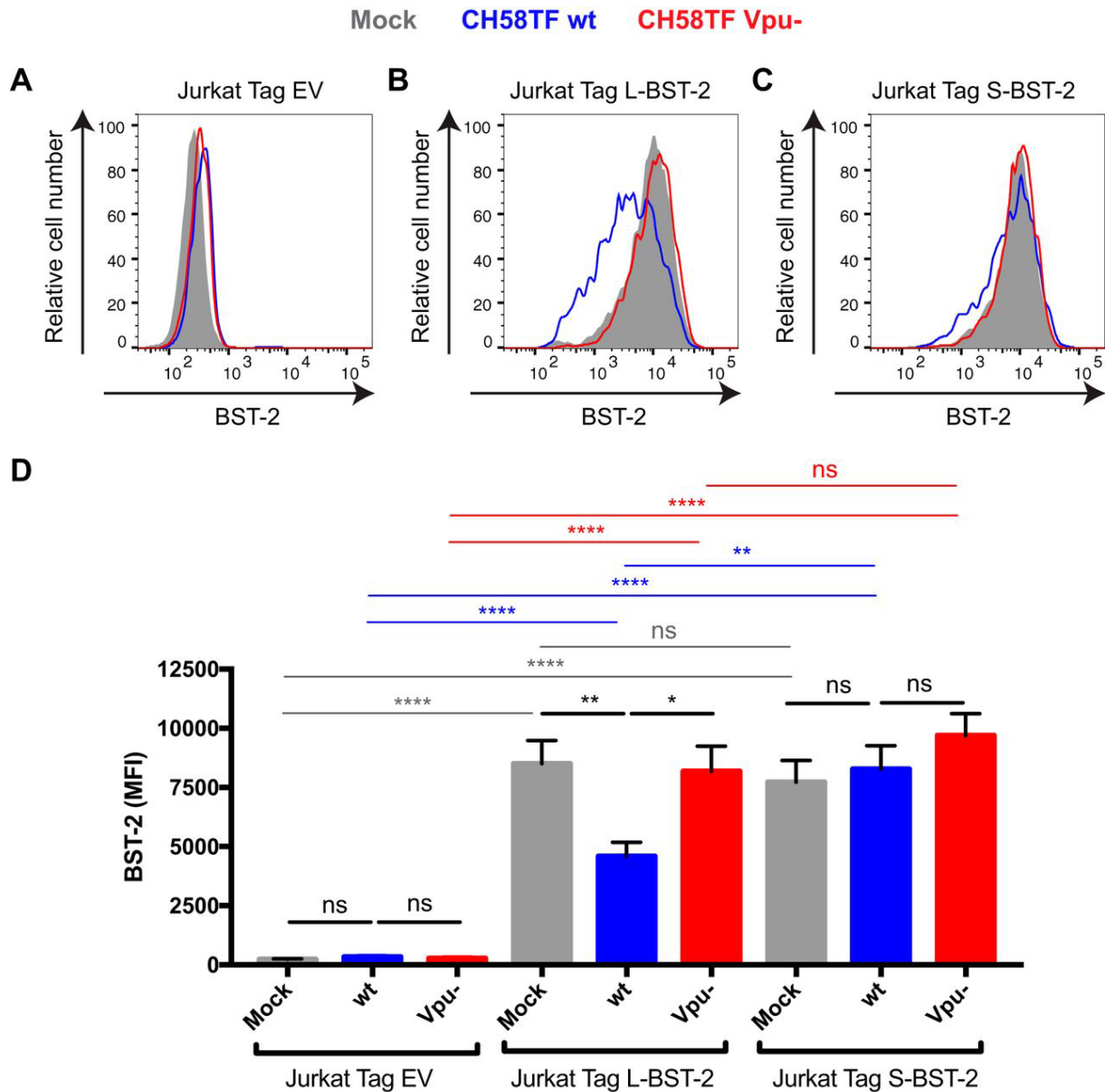
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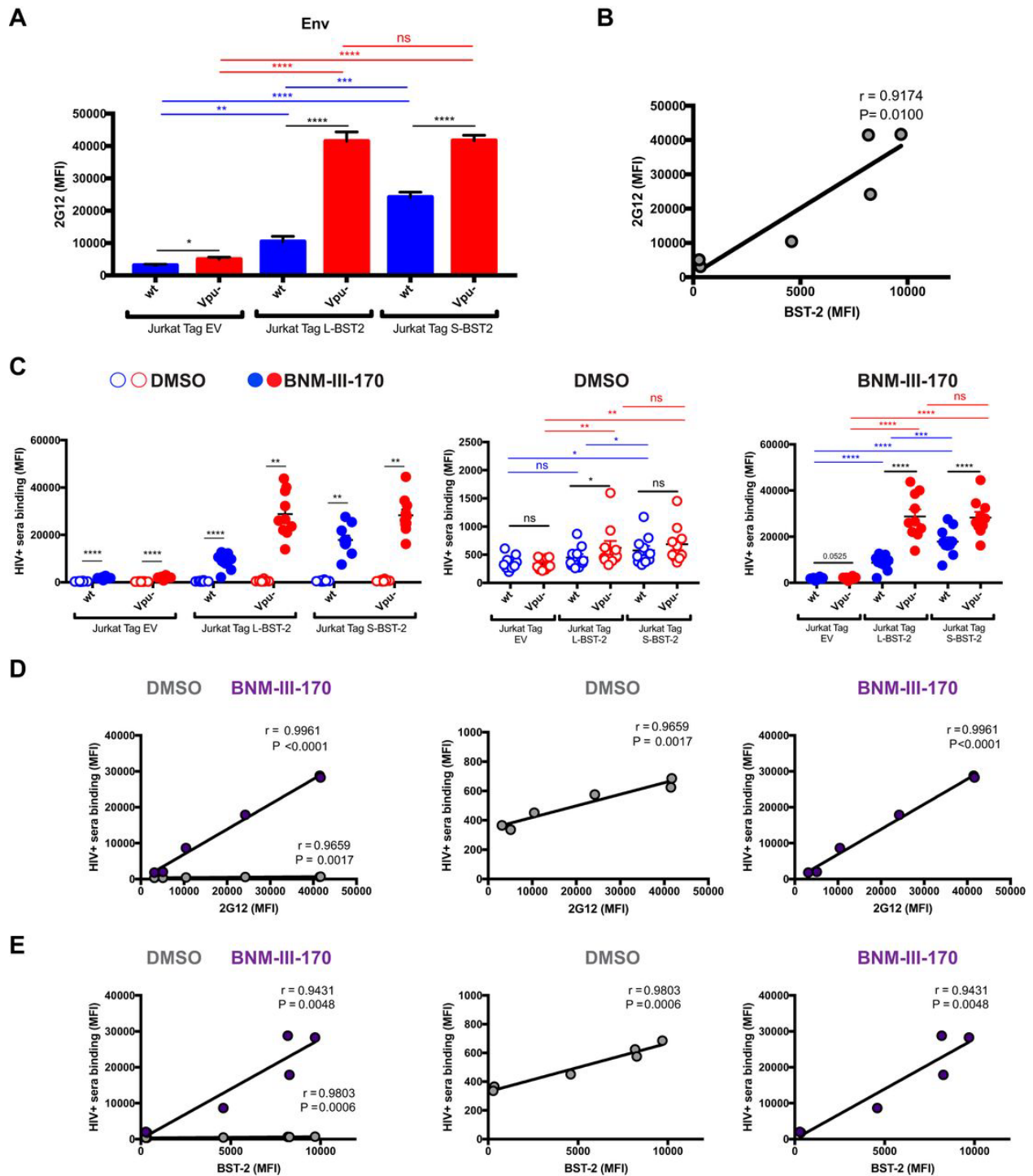
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### 6.3.10 FIGURES



**Figure 6.2.1 - Differential sensitivity of BST-2 isoforms to HIV-1 Vpu in Jurkat cell lines.**

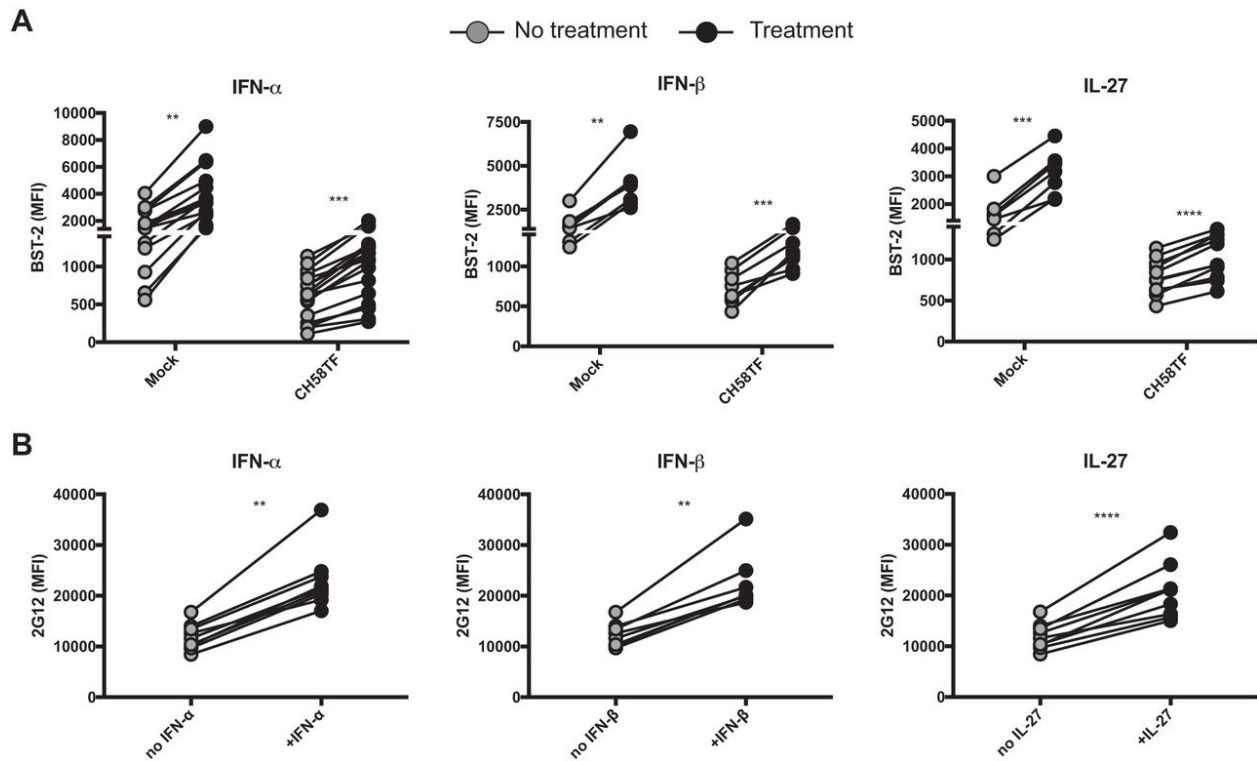
Jurkat Tag cells (**A and D**) expressing no BST-2 (Jurkat Tag EV [empty vector]) or stably expressing the L-BST-2 (**B and D**) or S-BST-2 (**C and D**) were mock infected or infected with the transmitted/founder virus HIV-1 CH58 (CH58TF) expressing Vpu (wild-type CH58TF [CH58TF wt]) or not expressing Vpu (CH58TF Vpu-). Forty-eight hours post-infection, cells were stained with anti-BST-2 Ab, followed with appropriate secondary Abs. (**A to C**) Histograms depicting representative staining; (**D**) mean fluorescence intensity (MFI) obtained in at least six independent experiments. Values are means +/- standard error of the means (SEM) (error bars). Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ , \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ; ns, nonsignificant).





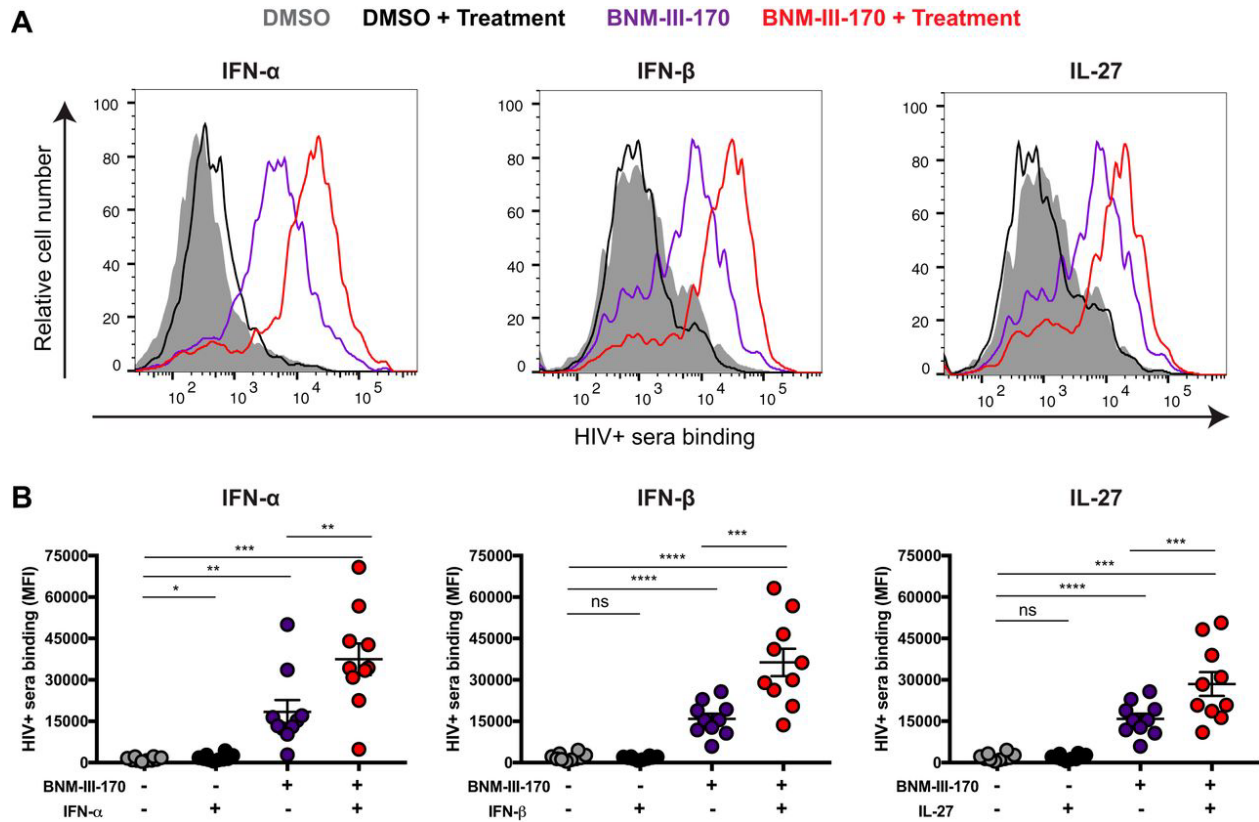
**Figure 6.2.2 - BST-2 expression correlates with cell surface Env level and recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera.**

Jurkat Tag cells expressing no BST-2 (Jurkat Tag EV [empty vector]) or stably expressing L-BST-2 or S-BST-2 were mock infected or infected with the transmitted/founder virus HIV-1 CH58 (CH58 T/F) expressing Vpu (wild-type CH58 T/F [wt]) or not expressing Vpu (Vpu<sup>-</sup>). Forty-eight hours post-infection, cells were stained with the anti-Env Ab 2G12 (**A and B**) or with sera from 10 HIV-1-infected individuals (**C**) in the presence of the CD4mc BNM-III-170 (50  $\mu$ M) or equivalent volume of DMSO, followed with appropriate secondary Abs. (**A**) Mean fluorescence intensity (MFI) of 2G12 binding obtained in at least six independent experiments; (**B**) correlation between 2G12 binding and BST-2 level. (**C**) MFIs obtained with all the different sera in the presence of CD4mc BNM-III-170 or DMSO; (**D and E**) correlation between HIV<sup>+</sup> serum binding and 2G12 level or BST-2 level, respectively, in the presence of 50  $\mu$ M CD4mc BNM-III-170 or DMSO. Values are means  $\pm$  standard error of the means (SEM) (error bars). Statistical significance was tested using an unpaired t test (**A**), a Pearson correlation test (**B, D, and E**), or a paired t test or Wilcoxon matched-pair signed-rank test based on statistical normality (**C**) (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ , \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ; ns, nonsignificant).



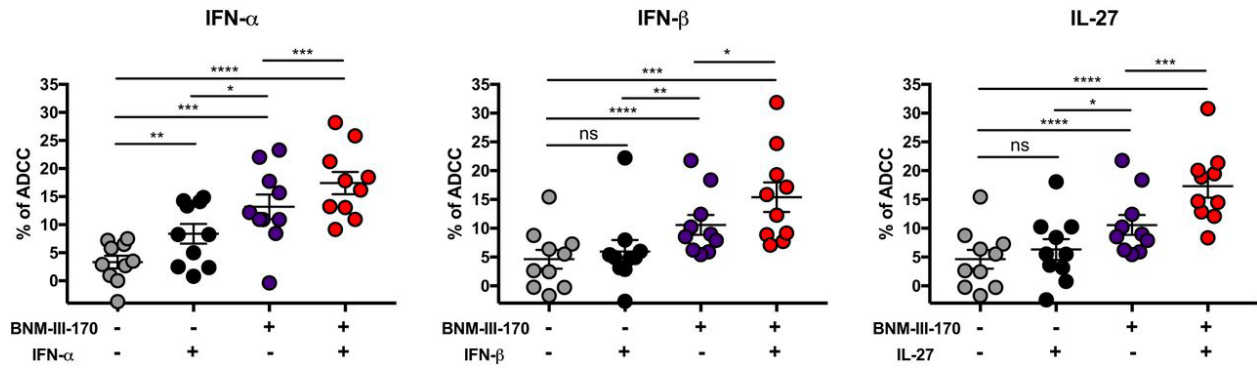
**Figure 6.2.3 - Treatment with type I IFNs or IL-27 enhances Env levels on the surface of HIV-1-infected cells through BST-2 upregulation.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were mock infected or infected with the transmitted/founder virus CH58 (CH58TF) and either treated for 24 h with type I IFNs (IFN- $\alpha$  and IFN- $\beta$ ) or IL-27 or not treated. Forty-eight hours post-infection, cells were stained with anti-BST-2 Ab (A) or anti-Env Ab 2G12 (B), followed with appropriate secondary Abs. The graphs shown represent the mean fluorescence intensities obtained for at least eight independent experiments. Statistical significance was tested using a paired t test or Wilcoxon matched-pair signed-rank test based on statistical normality (\*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ).



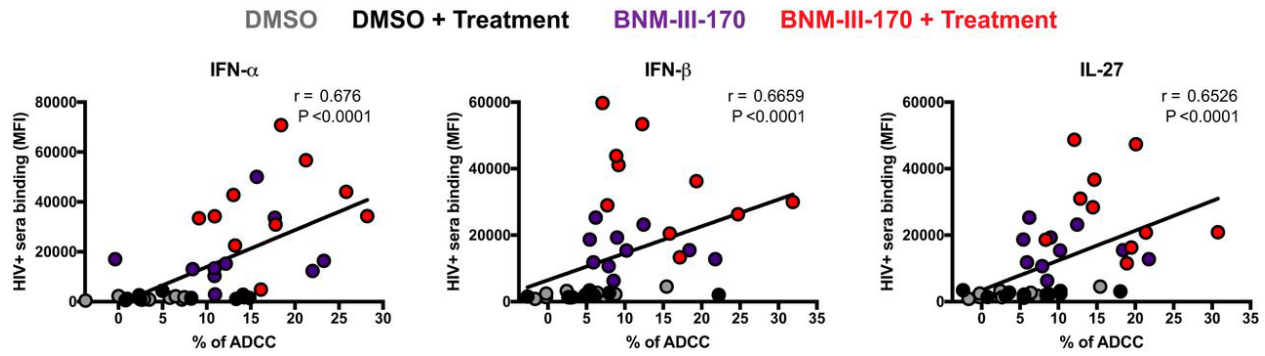
**Figure 6.2.4 - Treatment with type I IFN or IL-27 enhances recognition of HIV-1-infected cells by sera from HIV-1-infected individuals in the presence of CD4mc.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells were mock-infected or infected with the transmitted/founder virus HIV-1 CH58 (CH58 T/F) and either treated for 24 h with type I IFNs (IFN- $\alpha$  and IFN- $\beta$ ) or IL-27 or not treated. Forty-eight hours post-infection, cells were stained with sera from 10 HIV-1-infected individuals in the presence of the CD4mc BNM-III-170 (50  $\mu$ M) or an equivalent volume of DMSO, followed with appropriate secondary Abs. (A) Histograms depicting representative staining; (B) mean fluorescence intensities (MFI) obtained with all the different sera. Values are means  $\pm$  standard error of the means (SEM) (error bars). Statistical significance was tested using a paired t test or Wilcoxon matched-pair signed-rank test based on statistical normality (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ; ns, nonsignificant).



**Figure 6.2.5 - Treatment with type I IFNs or IL-27 boosts CD4mc sensitization of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC.**

Primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with the transmitted/founder virus CH58 (CH58 T/F), either treated for 24 h with type I IFNs (IFN- $\alpha$  and IFN- $\beta$ ) or IL-27 or not treated, were used as target cells, and autologous PBMCs were used as effector cells in our FACS-based ADCC assay. Shown are the percentages of ADCC-mediated killing obtained with sera from 10 HIV-1-infected individuals in the presence of the CD4mc BNM-III-170 (50  $\mu$ M) or an equivalent volume of DMSO. Values are means  $\pm$  standard error of the means (SEM) (error bars). Statistical significance was tested using a paired t test or Wilcoxon matched-pair signed-rank test based on statistical normality (\*,  $P < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $P < 0.01$ , \*\*\*,  $P < 0.001$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $P < 0.0001$ ; ns, nonsignificant).

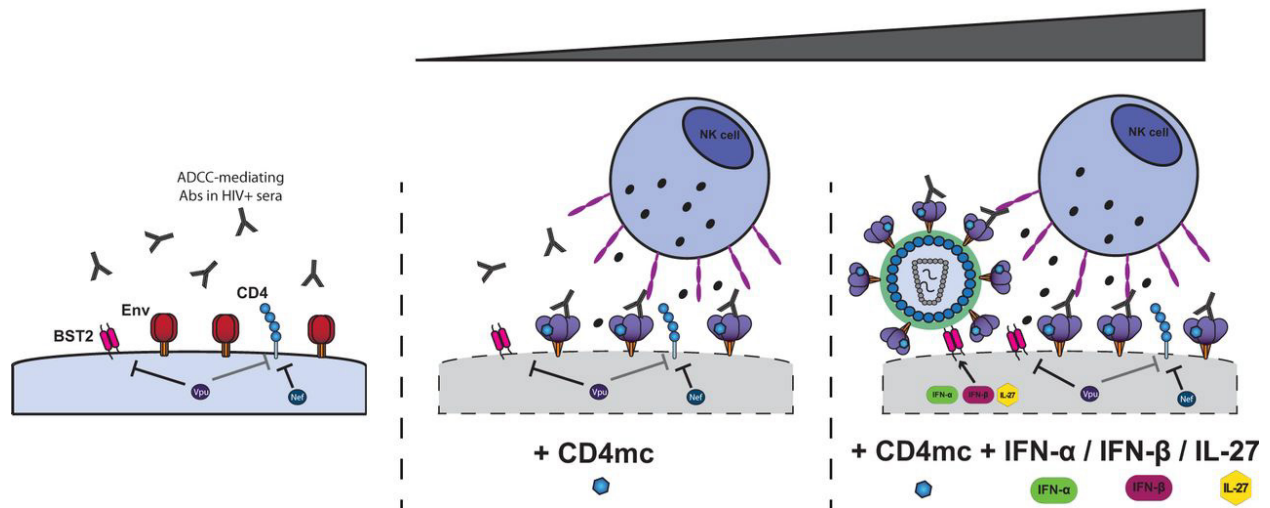


**Figure 6.2.6 - Enhanced recognition of HIV-1-infected cells positively correlates with enhanced ADCC responses.**

A positive correlation was observed between the recognition of primary CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells infected with the transmitted/founder virus CH58 (CH58 T/F) by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera and their ability to mediate an ADCC response. The correlations obtained for the different treatments (IFN- $\alpha$ , IFN- $\beta$ , or IL-27) are shown. Statistical analysis was tested utilizing a Spearman rank correlation.

## Protection from ADCC

## ADCC response



**Figure 6.2.7 - Env conformation and its accumulation at the cell surface dictates sensitivity of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC.**

ADCC-mediating Abs present in sera from HIV-1-infected individuals preferentially recognize Env in its CD4-bound conformation (1). To limit the exposure of this conformation, HIV-1 has evolved sophisticated mechanisms to counteract the host restriction factor BST-2 with the viral Vpu protein (7–9) and to downregulate CD4 by Nef and Vpu (7). Nef and Vpu decrease the accumulation of Env and its interaction with CD4 at the cell surface, two factors that determine the susceptibility of HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC. Small CD4 mimetics sensitize HIV-1-infected cells to ADCC mediated by HIV<sup>+</sup> sera by forcing Env to sample its CD4-bound conformation (5). Type I IFNs or IL-27 treatment, through upregulation of BST-2 despite Vpu activity, boosts the ability of CD4mc by increasing the amounts of CD4mc-sensitized Env available on the cell surface.

## **CHAPITRE VII - DISCUSSION ET PERSPECTIVES**

Malgré les nombreux mécanismes connus du VIH-1 pour évader la réponse humorale non-neutralisante, un pan de la littérature suggère que les nnAbs peuvent jouer un rôle important dans l'élimination des cellules infectées par le VIH-1, affectant ainsi l'efficacité de la transmission, la réplication virale et la progression de la maladie. Les travaux présentés dans cette thèse avaient pour objectif général de caractériser en détail les différents déterminants viraux et cellulaires agissant sur la conformation d'Env et sur la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs afin de déterminer leur utilité dans l'élaboration de vaccins pour limiter l'acquisition du virus ou d'immunothérapies à base d'anticorps dans le but d'une guérison fonctionnelle. Les résultats présentés dans le cadre des précédents chapitres nous ont permis de faire la lumière sur ces divergences théoriques par l'identification de biais expérimentaux et de particularités propres à certaines souches virales. Ces informations ont été utilisées afin d'optimiser des stratégies permettant d'augmenter l'activité antivirale des nnAbs dans le cadre d'approches thérapeutiques innovantes visant l'éradication des réservoirs viraux.

## 7.1 Contributions majeures de cette thèse

L'objectif du **chapitre III** était de déterminer les manières les plus adéquates de quantifier la réponse ADCC dirigée contre les cellules infectées. Pour ce faire, il semble plus qu'important de connaître la conformation d'Env exposée à la surface des cellules cibles, d'identifier clairement les populations cellulaires à cibler et de s'assurer que le virus utilisé soit pleinement infectieux puisque ces paramètres dicteront la reconnaissance antigénique. Nous avons identifié un nombre important de biais inhérents à certaines techniques d'ADCC pouvant altérer l'interprétation et la pertinence biologique des résultats obtenus. En effet, certaines méthodes quantifient principalement la réponse ADCC dirigée contre les cellules non-infectées recouvertes de gp120 monomérique soluble et potentiellement de particules virales (**article 2**). Ces systèmes ne sont pas représentatifs de la réponse anticorps dirigée contre les cellules productivement infectées puisqu'Env se lie au CD4 et adopte sa conformation « ouverte », ce qui amène à surestimer la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs et sous-estimer celle médiée par les bNAbs. Les techniques spécifiques aux cellules infectées peuvent également surestimer la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs lorsque la construction virale (IMC) utilisée est incapable d'induire une suppression complète des niveaux de surface de CD4 et de BST-2 (**article 3**). L'utilisation d'IMC du VIH-1 comportant un gène rapporteur comme celui de la luciférase est envisageable dans le contexte où



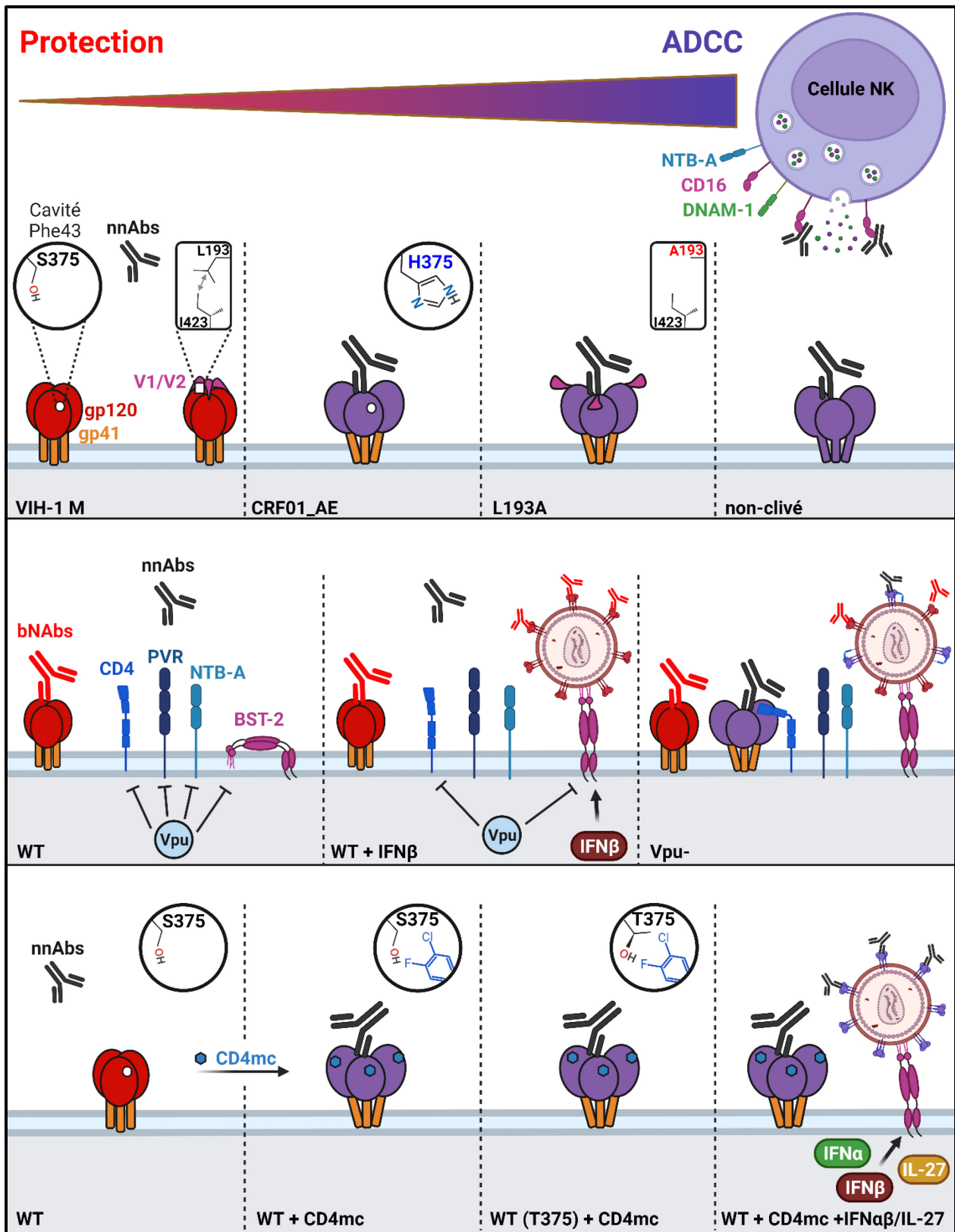
l'expression de Nef et Vpu demeure similaire aux niveaux d'expression des virus de type sauvage. À cet effet, le nouveau marquage intracellulaire développé dans l'**article 4** représente un outil pratique permettant de confirmer que ces deux protéines accessoires soient exprimées à des niveaux physiologiques.

Le **chapitre IV** avait pour but d'identifier les déterminants structuraux d'Env, qu'ils soient hautement conservés ou polymorphiques, affectant sa conformation et l'élimination des cellules infectées par les nnAbs présents chez les individus infectés ou vaccinés. En utilisant une technique d'ADCC spécifique aux cellules infectées, nous avons démontré qu'en plus de réguler négativement l'expression de CD4 à la surface des cellules infectées, le VIH-1 se doit de garder l'Env non-liée dans sa conformation « fermée » afin de protéger les cellules infectées de la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs (**Figure 7.1 - panel du haut**). En effet, la substitution de résidus hautement conservés de la cavité Phe43 dans le site d'interaction à CD4 (S375), du domaine d'association du trimère (L193) ou du site de clivage de la furine (R508/R511) favorise les transitions vers la conformation « ouverte » et augmente la susceptibilité aux activités effectrices du sérum VIH<sup>+</sup>. Parmi ceux-ci, le résidu 375 a la particularité d'être conservé à travers la majorité des clades prédominants du VIH-1 à l'exception des souches CRF01\_AE. En effet, un polymorphisme naturel est présent chez le sous-type CRF01\_AE (H375), ce qui accroît la reconnaissance et l'élimination des cellules infectées par les nnAbs par rapport aux autres sous-types. Ceci suggère que le clade CRF01\_AE pourrait être plus sensible à des interventions vaccinales ou thérapeutiques dépendant des réponses non-neutralisantes.

Comme la conformation d'Env n'est pas le seul facteur impliqué dans la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à la réponse humorale, l'objectif du **chapitre V** était de déterminer les déterminants fonctionnels de Vpu jouant un rôle dans l'évasion de la réponse ADCC. Vpu est une petite protéine multifonctionnelle capable de cibler une grande variété de protéines cellulaires par leur séquestration dans des compartiments périnucléaires des voies de sécrétion et par la dégradation de certains de ses substrats. Nous montrons que la capacité de Vpu à cibler simultanément les protéines NTB-A et PVR, en plus de CD4 et BST-2, permet de protéger efficacement les cellules infectées de la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs et de limiter l'activité effectrice Fc-dépendante des bNAbs (**Figure 7.1 - panel du milieu**). Leurs récepteurs

respectifs (NTB-A et DNAM-1) présents à la surface des cellules NK peuvent agir à titre de corécepteurs dans l'activation des fonctions effectrices par le récepteur Fc CD16. La présence d'IFN-I débalance la polyfonctionnalité de Vpu en augmentant BST-2, qui est préférentiellement ciblé par rapport à NTB-A et PVR, ce qui augmente l'élimination des cellules infectées par les anticorps dirigés contre Env. Nous démontrons également que l'importance de Vpu pour la réplication du VIH-1 *in vivo* va au-delà de sa capacité à augmenter la relâche et l'infectivité des particules virales. En effet, l'absence de Vpu rend la réplication du virus sous-optimale en présence de nnAbs, du moins pendant la phase aiguë de l'infection. L'utilisation de stratégies affectant ou contournant la polyfonctionnalité de Vpu semble être importante pour exploiter l'activité antivirale des nnAbs.

Comme Env, Nef et Vpu agissent de concert afin de garder Env dans sa conformation « fermée » et de limiter son expression de surface, le but du **chapitre VI** était d'optimiser de nouvelles approches expérimentales utilisant des CD4mc afin d'exploiter les activités antivirales des nnAbs. Pour ce faire, nous avons caractérisé la contribution de certains résidus polymorphiques d'Env, présents naturellement chez certaines souches, affectant sa sensibilité au CD4mc afin d'informer le développement de molécules plus puissantes et à plus large spectre (**Figure 7.1 - panel du bas**). Nous avons identifié des résidus polymorphiques à l'intérieur et au pourtour de la cavité Phe43, où le CD4mc s'insère. Entre autres, le clade CRF01\_AE est complètement résistant au CD4mc grâce notamment au résidu H375, tandis qu'une certaine proportion des isolats des clades prédominants (A, B et C) possède un résidu T375 les rendant particulièrement sensibles au CD4mc et ainsi à l'élimination des cellules infectées par les nnAbs. Nous avons également montré qu'il est possible d'améliorer la capacité du cocktail combinant CD4mc et nnAbs à cibler les cellules infectées en augmentant les niveaux d'Env présents à leur surface à l'aide de cytokines comme les IFN-I ou l'IL-27. La combinaison de stratégies affectant la conformation d'Env, la polyfonctionnalité de Vpu et le recrutement des cellules effectrices pourrait s'avérer utile dans le cadre d'immunothérapies à base de nnAbs pour éliminer les réservoirs du VIH-1.



### Figure 7.1 - Contributions majeures de cette thèse.

Vue d'ensemble des principales contributions de cette thèse à la compréhension de la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC. **(Panel du haut)** Plusieurs éléments conservés de l'Env du VIH-1 contribuent à stabiliser sa conformation « fermée », notamment la cavité Phe43, le domaine d'association du trimère et le site de clivage de la furine. L'altération d'un de ces éléments permet d'exposer Env dans sa conformation « ouverte », ce qui rend les cellules infectées susceptibles à la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs présents dans le sérum VIH<sup>+</sup>. **(Panel du milieu)** La protéine accessoire Vpu cible CD4, PVR, NTB-A et BST-2 de manière simultanée, permettant d'évader l'ADCC médiée par les nnAbs et de diminuer l'ADCC médiée par les bNAbs. L'augmentation de BST-2 par les IFN-I diminue la polyfonctionnalité de Vpu en compétitionnant pour l'interaction avec son domaine transmembranaire, ce qui empêche la régulation négative de PVR et NTB-A. L'absence de Vpu rend les cellules infectées hypersensibles à l'ADCC médiée par les nnAbs et bNAbs. **(Panel du bas)** Les CD4mc peuvent être utilisés pour « ouvrir » Env et diriger la réponse ADCC médiée contre les cellules infectées. Des polymorphismes naturels à l'intérieur ou au pourtour de la cavité Phe43 modulent la sensibilité d'Env pour les CD4mc. La régulation positive de BST-2 par les IFN-I ou l'IL-27 permet d'augmenter la capacité des CD4mc à induire une réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs contre les cellules infectées. ADCC : Cytotoxicité cellulaire dépendante des anticorps; nnAbs : anticorps non-neutralisants; VIH-1 M : groupe M du VIH-1; bNAbs : anticorps neutralisants à large spectre; WT : virus de type sauvage; IFN :interféron; CD4mc: mimétique moléculaire de CD4. Diagramme créé avec [BioRender.com](https://www.biorender.com).

## 7.2 Implications pour l'évasion des fonctions effectrices immunitaires

Le VIH-1 utilise une variété de stratégies pour protéger les cellules infectées des fonctions effectrices médiées par les anticorps ciblant Env, notamment en masquant des épitopes conformationnels hautement conservés et en réduisant la quantité d'Env accessible à la surface des cellules. Les présents travaux aident à mieux comprendre les résultats divergents dans la littérature et proposent un modèle unificateur postulant que la conformation d'Env est le principal facteur limitant la réponse humorale non-neutralisante, telle que dictée par ses propriétés intrinsèques (**articles 5, 6 et 7**) et son interaction avec CD4 (**articles 3, 4 et 9**). Ces résultats aident à comprendre pourquoi les isolats de laboratoire classifiés dans le tiers 1 (par exemple : HXB2, NL4-3, Ba-L, SF162, 89.6) sont particulièrement sensibles à la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs comparativement aux isolats primaires de tiers 2 et 3 ([1241](#), [1435](#), [1438](#)). Il faut savoir que les virus adaptés en laboratoire sont généralement isolés à partir d'échantillons biologiques prélevés chez des patients dans la phase SIDA et sont subséquemment mis en culture *in vitro* pendant plusieurs semaines ([37](#), [1439-1442](#)), ce qui suggère qu'ils ont évolué en absence d'une pression immunitaire humorale adéquate autant *in vivo* qu'*in vitro*. Ainsi, il a été démontré que l'Env de

ces souches présente une propension plus grande à adopter la conformation « ouverte » par rapport à la majorité des souches en circulation ([217](#), [218](#)), qui s'accompagne occasionnellement de la délétion ou de l'atténuation des fonctions de certaines protéines accessoires comme Nef et Vpu ([37](#), [1443-1446](#)). La sensibilité accrue des souches de VIH-1 du tiers 1 à la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs n'est donc pas représentative des quasi-espèces retrouvées chez les individus infectés, ce qui plaide en faveur de l'utilisation de souches de type sauvage de tiers 2 et 3 possédant une pertinence biologique comme les souches T/F ou les souches responsables du rebond viral à la suite de l'interruption du traitement ART ([789](#), [1003](#)). À cet effet, nous montrons qu'il est possible d'induire un phénotype semblable aux virus du tiers 1 chez des souches T/F du tiers 2 en mutant des résidus clés d'Env (**articles 5, 6 et 7**), en bloquant l'expression de Nef et/ou Vpu (**articles 2, 3, 4 et 9**) ou en utilisant des petites molécules mimant CD4 (**articles 10 et 11**).

La conformation « fermée » du trimère d'Env peut être déstabilisée aisément lorsqu'on introduit des substitutions dans ses domaines structuraux conservés. Entre autres, on y retrouve le domaine d'association du trimère qui est situé à l'apex des protomères de gp120 et qui joue un rôle prépondérant dans l'intégrité du trimère d'Env. Cette structure est composée des boucles V1/V2, V3 et  $\beta 20\text{-}\beta 21$ , qui forment des interactions intra- et inter-protomères stabilisées via d'imposants clusters de résidus hydrophobiques ([1447](#)) et des résidus modifiés de manière post-traductionnelles comme des tyrosines sulfatées (Y173, Y177) et des asparagines glycosylées (N156, N197) ([1448-1451](#)). Par exemple, le résidu L193 de la boucle V1/V2 (**article 5**) forme une interaction cruciale avec un autre résidu hydrophobe (I423) de la boucle  $\beta 20\text{-}\beta 21$  afin de stabiliser l'apex du trimère d'Env ([1452](#), [1453](#)). À l'instar du résidu L193, la mutation du résidu I423 chez des souches T/F du tiers 2 induit « l'ouverture » prématurée d'Env, ce qui mène à une meilleure reconnaissance de celles-ci par les nnAbs (**annexe I**). Il existe également plusieurs autres éléments conservés d'Env que ceux étudiés dans le **chapitre IV**. L'une des caractéristiques remarquables d'Env est sa très longue queue cytoplasmique (CT) qui joue un rôle notamment dans son interaction avec la membrane lipidique, son endocytose par la voie de la clathrine et son incorporation efficace dans les particules virales ([162](#), [195](#), [1454-1456](#)). Plusieurs évidences suggèrent que la troncature de la CT peut également influencer la structure antigénique de l'ectodomaine d'Env ([1457](#), [1458](#)), ce qui pourrait avoir comme effet d'augmenter la capacité des nnAbs à reconnaître les cellules infectées. En écourtant séquentiellement la CT, nous avons observé que la troncature quasi-

complète de la CT (<sup>712</sup>STOP) était nécessaire pour augmenter la liaison des nnAbs de manière significative, suggérant la présence d'une structure charnière à l'extrémité 5' de la CT d'Env (**annexe II - Figures 1 et 2**). Il a déjà été démontré que le motif d'endocytose de la CT (<sup>712</sup>YXXΦ<sup>715</sup>) est essentiel pour l'internalisation constitutive d'Env par la voie dépendante de la clathrine, ce qui permet de limiter les niveaux d'Env à la surface des cellules infectées ([1101](#)). Cette étude montre que la mutation du résidu Y712 de ce motif est suffisante pour sensibiliser les cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs présents chez les individus infectés par le VIH-1 ([1101](#)). Or, tel qu'observé dans les chapitres précédents, l'augmentation d'Env n'est pas suffisante pour induire une réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs, mais peut rehausser la susceptibilité des cellules infectées si Env adopte sa conformation « ouverte » (**articles 4, 9 et 11**). En suivant cette logique, nous montrons que le résidu Y712 affecte non seulement l'endocytose d'Env, mais également sa conformation, ce qui rend les cellules infectées hautement susceptibles à la réponse ADCC médiée par le sérum VIH+ (**annexe II - Figures 2 et 3**). Malgré tout, il existe très peu de données structurales permettant de comprendre le rôle du résidu Y712 dans la conformation d'Env. Cela pourrait dépendre de sa localisation à l'interface du trimère de CT ([195](#)) ou encore de son interaction avec un partenaire cellulaire (AP-2) ([414](#)). Mis ensemble, ces exemples additionnels viennent renforcer le rôle central joué par la conformation d'Env dans la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs tel que proposé dans le **chapitre IV**.

En plus de la réponse ADCC, il semble évident que la conformation d'Env puisse agir comme facteur limitant dans l'activation d'autres fonctions effectrices Fc-dépendantes comme celles impliquant la phagocytose (ADCP) ou la cascade du complément (ADCML). Tout comme c'est le cas pour la quantification de l'ADCC (**article 2**), la plupart des techniques mesurant la réponse ADCP ne prennent pas en compte la conformation d'Env et très peu d'études utilisent des cellules infectées avec des virus de type sauvage comme cellules cibles. Les méthodes d'ADCP les plus répandues utilisent plutôt des billes de latex recouvertes de protéines recombinantes biotinylées ([1459](#)), souvent sous forme de gp120 monomérique, d'ectodomaine de gp41, de gp140 non-clivée, ou même de peptides; tous ces antigènes sont connus pour exposer abondamment les épitopes CD4i comparativement au trimère d'Env natif ([1460-1462](#)). Dans cet ordre d'idées, il a été démontré que certains nnAbs sont capables d'induire la phagocytose de billes recouvertes de gp120 ou de gp41 recombinantes, mais pas celles recouvertes d'Env trimérique adoptant la

conformation « fermée » ([1463](#)). Néanmoins, l'utilisation de ces billes recouvertes d'antigènes d'Env peut devenir problématique du fait qu'elles sont peu représentatives des cellules infectées à cause de leur taille beaucoup plus petite, de l'immobilité de l'antigène et de l'absence de protéines cellulaires régulant l'activation de la réponse ADCP. Par exemple, la molécule CD47 agit à titre de marqueur du soi capable d'inhiber la phagocytose des cellules infectées lorsqu'elle interagit avec son récepteur SIRP $\alpha$  sur les cellules phagocytaires ([1464-1466](#)). Bien que Vpu soit connu pour diminuer légèrement les niveaux de surface de CD47, les cellules infectées conservent une certaine résistance à la phagocytose en absence d'anticorps ([1467](#)). Il a été démontré que les cellules non-infectées recouvertes de particules virales sont hautement susceptibles à l'ADCP médiée par les nnAbs présents dans le sérum VIH+ ([1468](#)), mais leur capacité à induire la phagocytose des cellules infectées par le VIH-1 n'est pas bien définie dans la littérature. On peut spéculer sur le fait que les cellules infectées de manière productive devraient être résistantes à la réponse ADCP par les nnAbs, à moins d'utiliser les CD4mc pour « ouvrir » Env (**articles 6, 9, 10 et 11**). Pour ce qui est de la réponse ADCML, à l'instar de la réponse ADCC, le recrutement du complément et la déposition de molécules C3b médiée par les nnAbs présents dans le sérum VIH+ sont largement dépendants de la reconnaissance d'Env et de l'action des protéines accessoires Nef et Vpu ([1276](#)). Or, il s'avère que la déposition du C3b n'est pas suffisante pour induire la lyse des cellules infectées et est souvent utilisée à tort pour mimer la réponse ADCML ([1276](#)). Même lorsque la liaison des anticorps et la déposition du C3b sont élevées, la présence de CD59 à la surface des cellules infectées est connue pour prévenir complètement leur élimination par le complément, que ce soit par les nnAbs (en absence de Nef et Vpu) ou par les bNAbs ([1274-1276](#)). Des études utilisant des modèles *in vivo* ont confirmé que la réponse ADCML avait très peu d'impact sur la transmission et la réplication du VIH-1, autant lors de l'administration passive de nnAbs que de bNAbs ([1248](#), [1469](#), [1470](#)). Dans l'ensemble, l'incapacité des nnAbs à reconnaître la conformation « fermée » d'Env semble prévenir l'activation des différentes fonctions effectrices Fc-dépendantes et ces mécanismes impliquent également des protéines cellulaires régulatrices dont la contribution devrait être non-négligeable.

Comme la réponse cytotoxique médiée par les lymphocytes T CD8<sup>+</sup> est particulièrement efficace pour éliminer les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 et pour contrôler la réplication du virus, certaines stratégies à base d'anticorps ont été mises à l'essai pour exploiter cette réponse CTL. On

peut penser aux DARTs (*dual-affinity re-targeting molecules*), qui sont des molécules bispécifiques comportant le fragment variable (Fv) d'un anticorps dirigé contre l'Env du VIH-1 et un autre Fv dirigé contre le TCR afin de favoriser le recrutement des CTL effectrices pour éliminer les cellules infectées (1471). Deux DARTs sont présentement en essai clinique de phase 1 ([ClinicalTrials.gov](https://clinicaltrials.gov) : NCT03570918, NCT05261191) et ceux-ci reconnaissent des épitopes CD4i de la gp120 (A32xCD3) ou de la gp41 (7B2xCD3). Or, il s'avère que les études précliniques effectuées pour vérifier leur activité antivirale ont principalement été faites sans tenir compte de la conformation d'Env présente à la surface des cellules cibles. On note plusieurs biais favorisant la réponse nnAbs dans la sélection des souches virales et des méthodes de quantification de la cytotoxicité, souvent sans discrimination entre les cellules infectées et les cellules non-infectées (1472-1474). Parmi les virus utilisés, on peut remarquer l'utilisation de souches adaptées en laboratoire (HXB2, Ba-L), de souches mutées (S375H), de souches du clade CRF01\_AE ou encore de souches n'exprimant pas Nef (IMC-LucR.T2A) (1472-1476), et toutes ces conditions favorisent la conformation « ouverte » d'Env, donc la liaison des nnAbs (**articles 3, 4, 7, 9 et 10**). Les souches déficientes pour Nef sont non seulement incapables de moduler CD4 à la baisse aux mêmes niveaux que les souches de type sauvage, mais également plusieurs récepteurs contribuant à l'activation de la réponse CTL. En effet, les constructions virales de type IMC-LucR.T2A ne peuvent cibler ni les molécules HLA-A et HLA-B dû à l'absence de Nef (1477) ni les molécules HLA-C puisqu'elles codent pour la protéine Vpu de la souche de laboratoire NL4-3 (711, 712, 1088). Nous avons généré des données préliminaires confirmant que les niveaux de surface des molécules classiques du CMH-I ne sont pas altérés lorsque les cellules sont infectées par les IMC-LucR.T2A (**annexe III**), ce qui pourrait augmenter fortement leur susceptibilité à la réponse CTL. L'augmentation des niveaux des ligands de NKG2D en absence de Nef (**article 3**) pourrait aussi contribuer à la sensibilité accrue des cellules infectées à la réponse CTL puisque les lymphocytes T CD8<sup>+</sup> expriment le récepteur activateur NKG2D, qui agit à titre de molécule costimulatrice du TCR (1478, 1479). En bref, ceci suggère que les DARTs à base de nnAbs devraient être inefficaces à purger les réservoirs du VIH-1 chez les individus infectés à moins de les combiner avec une stratégie pour « ouvrir » Env comme par l'utilisation des CD4mc.



### 7.3 Implications évolutives

Encore aujourd'hui, il n'est toujours pas clair pourquoi les souches du VIH-1 du groupe M (VIH-1 M) sont plus prévalentes et plus pathogéniques que les souches du VIH-1 des groupes N, O et P ainsi que les souches du VIH-2 ([39](#), [89](#), [117](#), [1480-1482](#)). Leurs capacités répliquatives supérieures pourraient être liées à leur habilité à évader certaines réponses immunitaires plus efficacement comme la réponse ADCC. Les fonctions effectrices Fc-dépendantes pourraient exercer une pression sélective sur la conformation d'Env et la régulation de plusieurs protéines cellulaires par Nef et Vpu, ce qui pourrait avoir façonné l'évolution du VIH-1 du groupe M à partir de son précurseur SIVcpzPtt et des ancêtres de celui-ci. En effet, la réplication du VIH-1 *in vivo* en présence de nnAbs a tendance à sélectionner pour des mutations échappatoires stabilisant la conformation « fermée » d'Env et réduisant sa réactivité au CD4 ([1242](#), [1483](#)). Également, l'intégrité du sillon hydrophobe du TMD de Vpu, nécessaire à l'antagonisme de BST-2, NTB-A et PVR, confère un avantage répliquatif au VIH-1 dans les modèles de souris humanisées ([669](#)). Une étude utilisant une souche du SIVcpzPtt pour infecter de manière expérimentale des souris humanisées a également mis en lumière l'importance des mutations adaptatives dans le site de liaison à CD4 d'Env et le TMD de Vpu ([1484](#)).

Plusieurs domaines structuraux d'Env étudiés dans cette thèse pourraient avoir été soumis à une pression évolutive pour échapper à la réponse ADCC autant chez l'humain que chez les singes. Parmi ceux-ci, le site de clivage polybasique de la furine (RXK/RR) (**article 6**) et le motif d'endocytose à base de tyrosine de la CT (YXXΦ) (**annexe II**) sont des caractéristiques hautement conservées à travers les différentes lignées de VIH et de SIV (**annexe IV – Tableau 1**), et sont également communes avec les glycoprotéines d'enveloppe provenant d'autres lentivirus et rétrovirus simples ([1456](#), [1485-1488](#)). Le point de contrôle conformationnel formé par les résidus L193 et I423 (**article 5 et annexe I**), situé dans les groupements hydrophobes de l'apex du trimère d'Env, est une structure partiellement conservée parmi les lentivirus de primates puisque l'identité de ces résidus varie à travers les espèces, mais leur caractère hydrophobe demeure. De son côté, la cavité Phe43 est soumise à une pression évolutive plus stricte puisqu'il existe d'importantes variations alléliques dans le domaine D1 du récepteur CD4 chez les chimpanzés, les gorilles et les guenons arboricoles ([1489-1491](#)). La présence de polymorphismes à la position 375 et dans les couches topologiques du domaine interne de la gp120 pourrait permettre une certaine flexibilité

nécessaire pour s'adapter au CD4 d'autres espèces de primates (**articles 7 et 10**). Le VIH-1 du groupe M diffère des autres lentivirus humains et simiens par la présence d'un petit résidu polaire (S) à la position 375 d'Env, comparativement aux larges résidus hydrophobes (W, H, Y, F, M) retrouvés chez ces derniers. Sur les bases de l'identité du résidu 375 d'Env, nos résultats suggèrent que le groupe M du VIH-1 devrait être capable d'évader la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs plus efficacement que les autres lentivirus de primates, à l'exception du clade CRF01\_AE (**articles 7 et 10**). Malgré sa susceptibilité plus élevée aux nnAbs, plusieurs raisons pourraient expliquer pourquoi les souches du clade CRF01\_AE sont autant prévalentes, notamment par une transition vers le tropisme X4 et une déplétion des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> plus rapides ([1492-1495](#)).

Parmi les fonctions de Nef et Vpu impliquées dans la réponse ADCC, plusieurs semblent avoir été héritées directement des précurseurs simiens du VIH-1 tandis que d'autres semblent avoir été acquises lors de la transmission inter-espèces (**annexe IV – Tableau 2**). Le VIH-1 M semble être le lentivirus humain ayant réussi à mieux s'adapter à son hôte pour prévenir la réponse ADCC par les nnAbs en ciblant simultanément CD4 et BST-2, pour garder Env dans sa conformation « fermée » et réduire son expression de surface, ainsi que NTB-A, PVR et les ligands NKG2D, pour limiter l'activation des cellules NK (**articles 3, 4, 8 et 9**). Puisque la queue cytoplasmique de CD4 est bien conservée parmi les différents primates, les protéines Nef et Vpu de la majorité des souches de VIH sont capables de cibler CD4, à l'exception du Vpu provenant du VIH-1 N et de l'absence de Vpu chez le VIH-2 ([534](#), [537](#), [1496](#)). De son côté, le facteur de restriction BST-2 est beaucoup plus variable, notamment au niveau de sa CT et de son TMD, et représente donc une barrière de transmission plus grande ([537](#), [1497](#)). Puisque les ancêtres proches du VIH (SIVcpzPtt, SIVgor et SIVsmm) utilisent Nef pour cibler le BST-2 de leur hôte respectif, mais sont incapables de cibler le BST-2 humain, le VIH-1 M a acquis la capacité d'antagoniser efficacement BST-2 par Vpu ([536-538](#), [1498](#)). Certaines souches du VIH ont également développé des antagonistes de BST-2, incluant Vpu (VIH-1 N), Nef (VIH-1 O) ou Env (VIH-2), mais ayant une activité sous-optimale ([531](#), [534](#), [537](#), [1496](#), [1499-1501](#)). De surcroît, le VIH-1 M est connu comme étant le seul lentivirus humain capable de cibler NTB-A et PVR ([709](#), [710](#), [1500](#)). En somme, il est possible que les fonctions effectrices Fc-dépendantes médiées par les nnAbs aient pu servir de barrière dans les transmissions intra- et inter-espèces, et que des adaptations dans les séquences d'Env, Nef et Vpu aient été nécessaires afin d'augmenter la réplication du virus en présence de nnAbs. Nos

résultats proposent que l'acquisition du résidu S375 d'Env et l'augmentation de la polyfonctionnalité de Nef et Vpu puissent avoir conféré un avantage évolutif au VIH-1 M contre la réponse humorale comparativement aux autres souches de lentivirus humains.

#### 7.4 Implications pour les modèles animaux

L'évaluation de l'efficacité des différentes approches prophylactiques ou thérapeutiques à base d'anticorps ciblant Env nécessite la mise au point de modèles animaux capables de récapituler le plus fidèlement possible l'infection par le VIH-1 chez l'humain. Les infections lentivirales de souris humanisées ou de NHP (comme les macaques rhésus) sont les deux principaux modèles animaux utilisés pour mimer l'infection du VIH-1 *in vivo*, chacun possédant leurs propres avantages et limitations ([1502-1505](#)). Le modèle de souris humanisées semble un modèle plus adéquat pour tester des immunothérapies à base de nnAbs puisqu'il permet l'utilisation de souches du VIH-1 non-modifiés et cliniquement pertinentes, tandis que l'infection de NHP nécessite l'utilisation de virus chimériques (SHIV) dont le génome ne comporte que les protéines Env, Vpu, Tat et Rev du VIH-1 ([669](#), [1323](#), [1506-1511](#)). De plus, l'infection de souris humanisées par le VIH-1 ne nécessitent aucune d'adaptation d'Env pour se répliquer, contrairement aux modèles conventionnels d'infection de NHP par le SHIV. En fait, la plupart des Env du VIH-1 ne se lient pas efficacement au CD4 de macaque rhésus (rhCD4) à cause d'un résidu polymorphique distinctif (I39) présent dans le CD4 de macaque par rapport au CD4 humain ([1512](#), [1513](#)). Cette particularité semble causer une réorientation de la boucle Phe43 de CD4 dont l'accommodation pourrait nécessiter une inévitable restructuration du site de liaison à CD4 d'Env, favorisant une conformation plus « ouverte » ([1512](#), [1514](#), [1515](#)). Pour cette raison, les premières générations de SHIV ont été construites à partir d'Env ayant un tropisme pour les macrophages (SF162, Ba-L, 89.6, AD8), connues pour leur réactivité intrinsèque plus prononcée ([1516-1520](#)). Ces souches particulières ont évolué pour utiliser des faibles densités de CD4 à la surface des cellules myéloïdes, ce qui a tendance à sélectionner des variants d'Env dont la conformation est plus « ouverte » et donc plus sensibles aux nnAbs ([1521-1524](#)). On retrouve ce type de souches principalement dans les sanctuaires immunitaires comme le cerveau ou dans la circulation sanguine pendant la phase SIDA, faisant face à une pression humorale moins importante ([1525-1529](#)). Ces souches sont donc peu représentatives des isolats cliniques du VIH-1 tels que les virus T/F, dont l'Env adopte une conformation plus compacte et résistante aux nnAbs ([787](#), [1241](#), [1530](#),

[1531](#)). Afin d'augmenter la pertinence biologique du modèle, les SHIV de nouvelle génération ont été élaborés avec des isolats de la phase aiguë de l'infection ([1514](#), [1532-1537](#)). Or, la vaste majorité de ces SHIV sont incapable de générer une infection productive et une réplication soutenue dans les modèles de NHP par manque d'affinité pour le rhCD4 ([1514](#), [1532-1536](#)). Afin de remédier à ce problème, ces SHIV ont été modifiés par l'introduction de résidus hydrophobes de grande taille à la position 375 de la cavité Phe43 ([1514](#), [1535](#), [1536](#), [1538](#)). Or, nos résultats montrent que ces modifications (S375H, S375W, S375Y) favorisent la conformation « ouverte » d'Env, rendant les cellules infectées hautement sensibles à la réponse ADCC par les nnAbs (**article 7 et annexe V**). De plus, des études récentes ont montré que des mutations dans le domaine d'association du trimère d'Env (e.g. L193A, I423A) (**article 5 et annexe I**) permettent également d'augmenter l'infection des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> de macaque, confirmant que la conformation d'Env est un déterminant majeur dans l'utilisation du rhCD4 par les SHIV ([1539-1541](#)). La présence de mutations en position 375 chez cette nouvelle génération de SHIV empêche également l'utilisation de ce modèle animal dans la caractérisation de petites molécules comme les CD4mc en comblant la cavité Phe43 (**article 10**). En quête d'alternatives, certains ont suggéré l'utilisation de nouvelles espèces de NHP dont le récepteur CD4 est compatible à l'entrée virale par des isolats primaires du VIH-1 sans adaptation, comme les singes-chouettes ([1542-1544](#)).

L'utilisation de virus primaires non-modifiés dans les modèles de souris humanisées permet également de prendre en compte la contribution des protéines accessoires Nef et Vpu à l'évasion de la réponse humorale en présence de leurs substrats cellulaires correspondants, tandis que ce n'est pas le cas dans les modèles de NHP. En effet, la dynamique fonctionnelle entre le Vpu du VIH-1 et les protéines cellulaires de macaque reste largement inconnue. Même si certains SHIV codent pour Vpu, son rôle reste ambigu puisque la protéine BST-2 présente chez les macaques est résistante à son antagonisme (**article 8**) ([536](#), [547](#), [1545](#)). La capacité de Vpu à cibler d'autres substrats comme NTB-A et PVR chez le macaque pourrait également être mitigée à cause de variations au niveau du TMD de leurs orthologues simiens. Malgré une certaine redondance fonctionnelle entre les protéines Nef du VIH-1 et du SIVmac, celles-ci semblent posséder quelques fonctions divergentes, notamment par la régulation négative du TCR observée exclusivement chez le Nef du SIVmac ([693](#), [1546-1548](#)). En ce sens, nous avons généré des données préliminaires montrant que contrairement au VIH-1, les SHIV de nouvelle génération sont incapables de réguler

négativement le ligand activateur PVR (**annexe VI**). De plus, nous ne savons pas si la protéine Nef de SIVmac est capable de cibler les ligands de NKG2D chez le macaque. Des études plus approfondies évaluant la susceptibilité des cellules infectées par les SHIV à la cytotoxicité médiée par les cellules NK s'imposent afin de répondre à ces questionnements. Néanmoins, peu importe le modèle animal, il faut faire preuve de prudence lors de la sélection de virus, car même les souches de VIH-1 utilisées chez les souris humanisées peuvent s'avérer défectueuses pour l'expression de Vpu ou de Nef ([1242](#), [1549-1551](#)).

Une importante limitation des modèles de souris humanisées est la reconstitution du système immunitaire humain dans les souris immunodéficientes et plus particulièrement les cellules responsables des réponses effectrices dépendantes des anticorps. Les plus récents modèles de souris humanisées tendent à corriger ce problème par des modifications génétiques permettant aux souris d'exprimer des cytokines humaines importantes pour le développement de certains compartiments cellulaires fonctionnels comme les cellules NK (IL-15) ainsi que les macrophages et monocytes (IL-3, GM-CSF, M-CSF) ([1552-1554](#)). Ces modèles sont également conçus pour limiter la phagocytose des cellules humaines par les cellules phagocytaires murines par la délétion du CD47 murin ou en par l'introduction du SIRP $\alpha$  humain ([1552](#), [1553](#), [1555](#), [1556](#)). Cela limite les risques de réaction du greffon contre l'hôte (GvHD) et augmente ainsi la longévité du modèle, permettant l'évaluation de stratégies thérapeutiques de cure fonctionnelle. En utilisant un de ces modèles (SRG-15), il a été démontré que les nnAbs sont capables de réduire la taille des réservoirs du VIH-1, mais seulement en présence de CD4<sub>mc</sub>, requérant une contribution importante des fonctions effectrices dépendantes des cellules NK ([1323](#)). C'est également avec ce modèle que nous avons démontré le rôle de Vpu dans l'évasion de la réponse humorale non-neutralisante *in vivo* (**article 9**).

## **7.5 Implications pour les stratégies vaccinales**

Parmi tous les essais vaccinaux de phases 2 et 3 ayant été testés au fil des années, seul l'essai vaccinal RV144 a démontré une efficacité modeste (31,2 %) à réduire le risque de transmission du VIH-1 ([78](#)). Des analyses ultérieures ont établi que les principaux corrélats immunitaires de la protection observée étaient les niveaux de nnAbs dirigés contre la boucle V1/V2 d'Env et une forte réponse ADCC chez les participants ayant une réponse IgA réduite

([1359](#), [1360](#)). Or, nos résultats suggèrent que cette protection modeste pourrait être due au fait que les souches prédominantes circulant en Thaïlande appartiennent au clade CRF01\_AE, dont la sensibilité à la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs est plus élevée par rapport aux autres clades (**article 7 et annexe V**). À la suite du succès modeste de l'essai RV144, de nombreuses études ont examiné la possibilité d'utiliser les nnAbs comme traitement préventif contre l'infection par le VIH-1 par immunisation passive ou par vaccination. L'administration prophylactique de nnAbs, sous forme monoclonale ou polyclonale, n'a montré aucune capacité à prévenir l'acquisition du VIH-1 dans les modèles animaux exposés à des virus du clade B ([1234](#), [1245-1248](#), [1437](#)). Une étude préclinique utilisant le même protocole de vaccination que celui de l'essai RV144 dans un modèle de NHP exposés à un SHIV du clade C n'a démontré aucun effet protecteur malgré l'induction d'une forte réponse nnAbs ([1433](#)). De même, l'essai vaccinal HVTN 702, dont l'approche expérimentale était calquée sur celle du RV144, a été incapable de protéger contre l'infection par les souches du clade C prédominantes en Afrique du Sud et il a dû être arrêté pour cause de futilité ([1363](#), [1364](#)). Dans l'ensemble, si l'activité ADCC est nécessaire à la protection vaccinale, comme l'a suggéré l'essai vaccinal RV144, nos résultats suggèrent qu'il est peu probable que la génération de nnAbs confère une protection à moins que des stratégies visant à « ouvrir » le trimère d'Env soient en place (**articles 6, 9, 10 et 11**). À l'appui de cette hypothèse, des NHP immunisés avec de la gp120 monomérique ont été complètement protégés contre une infection hétérologue par un SHIV, codant pour l'Env d'une souche T/F de clade C, seulement en présence de CD4mc ([1321](#)). Cette étude a montré que les nnAbs induits par l'immunogène gp120 ne protégeaient pas en l'absence de CD4mc, mais qu'ils étaient capables de neutraliser et de médier des fonctions effectrices en présence de CD4mc ([1321](#)). Il est difficile de déterminer si une stratégie vaccinale combinant le CD4mc et des immunogènes capables d'induire des nnAbs est une approche vaccinale viable, mais cette étude confirme que la conformation adoptée par Env sur les particules virales représente un paramètre critique à prendre en compte dans la conception de vaccin anti-VIH-1. Comme l'Env des souches T/F adopte préférentiellement sa conformation « fermée », il est donc préférable de choisir des stratégies permettant l'induction de bNAbs. En effet, une étude dans un modèle de NHP à laquelle j'ai contribué a permis d'identifier la neutralisation comme déterminant majeur de la protection vaccinale induite par l'immunogène d'Env trimérique SOSIP.664 ([1369](#)) et cette conclusion a été corroborée par une méta-analyse de treize études d'immunisation passive de bNAbs ([1557](#)). Or, seulement 2,5% des singes immunisés

avec le trimère SOSIP.664 ont réussi à générer une réponse neutralisante suffisante pour atteindre le seuil nécessaire à la protection contre une exposition répétée à un SHIV autologue ([1369](#), [1375](#)). Une étude plus récente a montré des progrès encourageants en utilisant un schéma de vaccination complexe combinant la technologie d'ARNm et une stratégie d'immunisation séquentielle dans un modèle simien, car la protection contre l'infection corrélait avec la génération de bNAbs ciblant le site de liaison à CD4 d'Env ([1384](#)).

Malgré que certaines études d'immunisation passive à l'aide de bNAbs aient montré que leur activité neutralisante peut être suffisante pour prévenir l'infection par le VIH-1 dans les modèles animaux ([1201](#), [1558](#), [1559](#)), les fonctions effectrices Fc-dépendantes peuvent contribuer à la protection par des bNAbs dont l'activité neutralisante est moins puissante ([1469](#), [1560](#)). Le développement d'une nouvelle plateforme de sérologie des systèmes permet de caractériser les réponses humorales effectrices induites par différents protocoles de vaccination ([1149](#), [1561-1565](#)). Celle-ci se concentre sur le profilage des anticorps induits par la vaccination via une variété de paramètres biophysiques (spécificité antigénique, isotype, glycosylation, affinité pour les FcγRs) et fonctionnels (cytotoxicité, phagocytose, déposition du complément). Cette plateforme a notamment été utilisée pour la sélection et la validation des approches expérimentales des essais vaccinaux HVTN 705 (interrompu pour cause de futilité) et HVTN 706 ([1365-1367](#)), en plus d'identifier les fonctions effectrices des anticorps comme corrélats de protection de ces vaccins dans les modèles animaux ([1566](#), [1567](#)). Malheureusement, les méthodes de quantification des réponses effectrices Fc-dépendantes incluses dans cette plateforme ne prennent pas en compte la conformation d'Env et utilisent typiquement des cellules cibles ou des billes d'agarose recouvertes d'antigènes recombinants (gp120, gp41, gp140, gp70) favorisant la détection de réponses non-neutralisantes (**article 2**). Il est donc peu probable que les données générées à l'aide de cette plateforme aient une pertinence biologique concernant l'immunité humorale nécessaire à prévenir l'acquisition des souches T/F du VIH-1. Afin d'augmenter son utilité dans l'évaluation de futures stratégies vaccinales, certains correctifs doivent être appliqués au niveau des analyses fonctionnelles, notamment par l'usage de techniques spécifiques aux cellules infectées et ciblant la conformation native « fermée » d'Env (**article 2**). Un autre outil intéressant dans la caractérisation des réponses effectrices vaccinales est l'établissement d'un panel standardisé de souches du VIH-1 de différents clades pour évaluer la réponse ADCC à large spectre ([1568](#)),

similairement au panel de neutralisation déjà existant ([1161](#)). Or, le premier panel développé en ce sens est composé exclusivement de constructions virales IMC-LucR.T2A défectives pour l'expression de Nef ([1568](#)), et il est donc peu probable que des données probantes et ayant une pertinence biologique quelconque soient générées à l'aide de ce panel. Nos résultats démontrent qu'il existe plusieurs alternatives afin de résoudre cette problématique, notamment via l'utilisation d'IMC possédant la cassette LucR.6ATRi ou d'IMC non-modifiés (**articles 3 et 4**). Quoiqu'il en soit, il semble logique que les panels de neutralisation et d'ADCC soient composés de souches T/F de type sauvage puisqu'elles sont responsables de l'infection initiale par le VIH-1.

## 7.6 Implications pour les stratégies thérapeutiques

La persistance des cellules réservoirs infectées de manière latente chez les PVVIH sous traitement ART est un obstacle à la guérison fonctionnelle de l'infection par le VIH-1. La stratégie du « shock and kill » vise à éradiquer ces réservoirs par l'activation transcriptionnelle et traductionnelle du provirus latent à l'aide de LRA et la destruction subséquente des cellules réactivées hébergeant le virus via le système immunitaire. Les travaux présentés dans les chapitres précédents se concentrent plus précisément sur l'optimisation de l'élimination des cellules infectées par le biais des fonctions effectrices Fc-dépendantes médiées par des anticorps dirigés contre l'Env du VIH-1. Plusieurs études réalisées dans des modèles animaux ont démontré la nécessité des fonctions effectrices pour une activité thérapeutique optimale des bNAbs *in vivo*, notamment par l'élimination des cellules infectées et le contrôle de la charge virale ([1199](#), [1470](#), [1569-1572](#)). Devant ces résultats encourageants, les bNAbs 3BNC117 et 10-1074 ont été testés dans des essais cliniques de phase 1b chez des individus infectés sous ART et ont montré une capacité à retarder le rebond viral jusqu'à 48 semaines après l'interruption du traitement ART chez certains patients, un phénomène possiblement attribuable à une modeste diminution des réservoirs viraux intacts ([1212](#), [1214](#), [1573](#)). Or, ces bénéfices thérapeutiques se limitent à une minorité d'individus puisque des souches résistantes à ces bNAbs sont déjà présentes chez certains individus ou se développent en cours de traitement chez d'autres ([1212-1214](#), [1573](#)). Comme ils sont facilement induits par l'infection ou la vaccination et que certains de leurs épitopes sont hautement conservés, les nnAbs sont présentement étudiés comme alternatives aux bNAbs dans des stratégies d'éradication des réservoirs du VIH-1 ([1233](#), [1316](#), [1323](#), [1574](#), [1575](#)). Or, nous avons démontré que les nnAbs utilisés seuls ne possèdent qu'une activité antivirale limitée *in vivo*



contre un virus de type sauvage (**article 9**), contrairement à ce qui avait été observé contre un virus défectif pour l'expression de Vpu ([1242](#)). En effet, une étude récente a permis de montrer que les fonctions effectrices des nnAbs peuvent avoir un impact sur l'élimination des réservoirs viraux, mais uniquement en présence de CD4mc ([1323](#)), rappelant encore une fois que la conformation d'Env est le principal facteur limitant pour les immunothérapies à base de nnAbs. En plus de la conformation d'Env, plusieurs paramètres additionnels sont à considérer dans l'optimisation d'une stratégie thérapeutique de « shock and kill » à base de nnAbs, concernant les propriétés intrinsèques des cellules réservoirs, la fonctionnalité des cellules effectrices et des anticorps, les niveaux d'antigènes et la contribution des protéines accessoires virales.

### 7.6.1 Propriétés intrinsèques des réservoirs

La nature du réservoir responsable de la persistance et du rebond viral suite à l'interruption du traitement ART est extrêmement complexe et les stratégies d'éradication se doivent de prendre en compte les capacités répliquatives, l'expression de marqueurs phénotypiques et la localisation anatomique de ces cellules. La population de provirus qui persiste dans le cadre du traitement ART est dominée par des provirus défectifs qui sont incapables de provoquer un rebond viral, contrairement aux provirus intacts compétents à la réplication qui forment le réservoir à cibler de manière thérapeutique ([1576-1586](#)). Une série d'études plutôt controversée rapporte des observations selon lesquelles les réservoirs viraux seraient enrichis dans les populations de lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> exprimant CD32a (FcγRIIa) ([870](#), [1587-1591](#)), ce qui pourrait les rendre plus résistantes à l'élimination par les fonctions effectrices humorales, probablement en compétitionnant avec les FcγR des cellules effectrices pour la liaison du fragment Fc des anticorps ([1592](#)). De manière intéressante, deux récentes études indépendantes ont montré à l'aide d'analyses transcriptomiques que les provirus intacts étaient enrichis dans des clones de lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> effecteurs mémoires cytotoxiques, possédant d'excellentes capacités de prolifération et comportant des granules lytiques composés de granzymes et de perforines ([1593](#), [1594](#)). Par leur nature cytotoxique, ces cellules expriment également de hauts niveaux du facteur anti-apoptotique BCL2 et de protéines inhibitrices de granzymes (SERPINB9) et de cathepsines (CST7), leur conférant une certaine résistance aux fonctions effectrices dépendant de l'apoptose comme les réponses ADCC et CTL ([1593](#), [1594](#)). L'utilisation d'inhibiteurs de BCL2 et de SERPINB9 pourrait faciliter l'élimination de ces cellules réservoirs par la réponse ADCC ([1595-](#)

[1601](#)). De manière encourageante, les stratégies de réactivation répandues combinant un agoniste de PKC et un inhibiteur de HDAC ont été montrées comme étant efficaces pour induire la traduction de protéines du VIH-1 chez les lymphocytes T<sub>EM</sub> ([869](#), [872](#), [1602](#)), toutefois il reste à déterminer si les niveaux d'expression d'Env induits seraient suffisants pour sensibiliser ces cellules infectées à l'ADCC ([1603](#)). Puisque les cellules réservoirs sont connues pour exprimer des niveaux élevés de molécules de point de contrôle immunitaire (PD-1, LAG-3, TIGIT, TIM-3) ([851](#), [858](#), [902](#), [904](#)), l'utilisation d'anticorps bloquants dirigés contre ces molécules inhibitrices pourrait permettre d'améliorer significativement la capacité des LRA à réactiver l'expression provirale chez les cellules réservoirs latentes ([1604](#), [1605](#)).

### **7.6.2 Fonctionnalité des cellules effectrices**

Les stratégies utilisées pour réactiver les réservoirs latents ainsi que pour augmenter la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC se doivent également d'être compatibles avec la fonctionnalité des cellules NK effectrices. Il faut d'abord être prudent dans la sélection des LRA puisque certains d'entre eux peuvent avoir un effet délétère sur les fonctions cytotoxiques des cellules NK ([1606-1608](#)). En effet, les agonistes de PKC ont tendance à induire une diminution des niveaux de CD16 et une augmentation des niveaux de NKG2D sur les cellules NK, ce qui pourrait globalement nuire à leur capacité à médier la réponse ADCC ([1607](#), [1608](#)). De plus, plusieurs inhibiteurs de HDAC ont des effets variables sur les niveaux de récepteurs activateurs des NK ([1606](#), [1608](#)). Par exemple, la romidepsine augmente l'expression de NKG2D, tandis que le panabinoestat diminue l'expression de NKG2D et DNAM-1 ([1608](#)). Les LRA peuvent aussi avoir un effet sur l'expression des ligands de ces récepteurs activateurs puisqu'un agoniste de PKC (prostratine) et plusieurs inhibiteurs de HDAC peuvent augmenter de manière importante les niveaux des ligands de NKG2D sur les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 ([1606-1608](#)). Comme cette augmentation semble dépendante de l'activation de la voie des dommages à l'ADN via ATR, il serait intéressant de déterminer l'effet de ces LRA sur l'expression de PVR, aussi régulé par l'activation d'ATR ([636](#), [1606](#)). D'autre part, le blocage des points de contrôle immunitaires pour réactiver les cellules infectées latentes pourrait également être avantageux pour les cellules NK. Effectivement, le récepteur inhibiteur TIGIT est augmenté durant la phase chronique de l'infection sur les cellules NK cytotoxiques co-exprimant le récepteur activateur DNAM-1 ([1609-1612](#)). Comme ces deux récepteurs partagent un ligand commun (PVR), certaines études ont évalué les

bénéfices d'utiliser un anticorps bloquant ciblant TIGIT sur les cellules NK et ont observé un regain dans leur capacité à médier les réponses cytotoxiques directes et dépendantes des anticorps dirigées contre les cellules infectées ([1609](#), [1611](#)). Les fonctions effectrices des cellules NK peuvent également être revigorées par une panoplie de cytokines, notamment l'IL-15 et les IFN-I, connues pour stimuler l'activation des cellules NK et pour augmenter l'expression de récepteurs activateurs, de cytokines et de granules cytolytiques ([1414-1416](#), [1613-1618](#)). Plusieurs études ont permis de confirmer que le traitement des cellules NK avec ces cytokines renforce leur capacité à éliminer les cellules infectées par la réponse ADCC médiée par les bNAbs et nnAbs ([1613-1617](#)).

### 7.6.3 Optimisation du cocktail thérapeutique

L'utilisation d'un modèle de souris humanisées supportant la latence du VIH-1 et comportant un compartiment de cellules NK fonctionnelles a permis de démontrer l'efficacité d'une combinaison de nnAbs et de CD4mc pour éliminer les réservoirs viraux ([1323](#)). Comme l'activité thérapeutique de ce cocktail dépend grandement de la capacité du CD4mc à « ouvrir » Env, il est important de continuer le développement de CD4mc plus puissants et à plus large spectre. En effet, la présence de polymorphismes naturels ou l'émergence de mutations échappatoires dans la cavité Phe43 et le domaine interne de la gp120 peuvent conférer une résistance aux différents CD4mc, incluant les composés les plus prometteurs comme BNM-III-170 et M48U1 (**article 10**) ([1330](#), [1619-1621](#)). L'optimisation de nouveaux dérivés de BNM-III-170 est en cours et certains d'entre eux démontrent déjà un spectre d'activité augmenté grâce à l'ajout de groupements capables d'accommoder certains polymorphismes en bordure de la cavité Phe43 ([1622](#)). L'identification d'un nouveau CD4mc issu d'un criblage à haut débit offre des possibilités intéressantes dans le développement de molécules plus puissantes ([1623](#), [1624](#)). D'ailleurs, le développement de cette nouvelle famille de CD4mc a été rendu possible grâce à nos travaux sur l'identification de résidus polymorphiques à l'intérieur et au pourtour de la cavité Phe43 d'Env (**article 10**). Ces informations ont mené à la conception d'une gp120 recombinante du clade CRF01\_AE modifiée (LM+HT), ayant une hypersensibilité au CD4mc et pouvant être utilisée aisément pour des analyses structurales par cristallographie à rayons X (**article 10**). Les structures générées avec les premiers analogues de ce nouveau CD4mc ont permis le développement guidé de molécules de plus en plus puissantes et dont le mode de liaison permet d'entrer en contact avec les résidus D368 et E370 ([1623](#), [1624](#)). Comme ces deux résidus sont

hautement conservés dans les souches du VIH-1 en circulation, cela pourrait garantir à ces molécules un spectre d'activité plus large que les composés des générations précédentes. Mis à part leur activité antivirale, il faut également explorer les propriétés pharmacocinétiques des CD4mc plus en profondeur. Comme les réservoirs viraux sont disséminés dans une grande variété d'organes et de tissus ([1625](#)), il est important de surveiller la biodistribution, la demi-vie et la toxicité potentielle des CD4mc *in vivo*. Des données préliminaires dans les souris ont démontré une bonne pénétration de BNM-III-170 dans les différents tissus lymphoïdes, excepté la moelle osseuse, sans toxicité observable dans les conditions testées ([1323](#)). Pour ce qui est de sa durée de vie, des données non-publiées suggèrent une persistance de la molécule dans l'organisme pendant environ 48 heures après l'administration, ce qui est semblable à ce qui a été rapporté précédemment pour d'autres CD4mc ([1324](#), [1325](#)). Considérant ce déclin rapide, il serait logique d'envisager la conjugaison du CD4mc à une protéine de plus longue demi-vie comme un anticorps. Certains groupes ont déjà développé des protéines de fusion à partir de nnAbs comportant un CD4 soluble (sCD4) lié au fragment Fab de l'anticorps via un peptide flexible de longueur variable ([1233](#), [1626-1628](#)). Ces protéines hybrides multivalentes possèdent ainsi des capacités accrues à neutraliser les particules virales et à médier l'élimination des cellules infectées par la réponse ADCC ([1233](#), [1626-1628](#)). Par le fait même, il serait intéressant de générer des nnAbs conjugués au CD4mc afin de voir si ces molécules conservent leurs fonctions effectrices tout en prolongeant la demi-vie des CD4mc.

D'autre part, nous cherchons également à améliorer le volet anticorps du cocktail thérapeutique, présentement composé de nnAbs ciblant le CoRBS et le cluster A ([1323](#), [1574](#), [1575](#), [1629](#), [1630](#)). Nous avons évalué la possibilité d'utiliser des nnAbs de spécificités diverses, mais dont les épitopes ne se chevauchent pas, comme les anticorps dirigés contre la boucle V3 ou le cluster I de la gp41 (**Figure 1.1.10**). Nous avons observé que la combinaison de ces quatre classes de nnAbs avec le CD4mc permettait d'augmenter la reconnaissance et l'élimination des cellules infectées par la réponse ADCC par rapport au cocktail original contenant uniquement deux classes d'anticorps (**annexe VII**). Cette amélioration semble être dépendante d'une meilleure mobilisation du FcγRIIIa par ce nouveau cocktail. Plusieurs études utilisant des bNAbs ont démontré que l'interaction des anticorps avec le FcγRIIIa puisse être optimisée par l'altération de la glycosylation ou par la mutation de résidus du fragment Fc des anticorps ([1253](#), [1255](#), [1256](#),

[1569](#), [1571](#), [1631](#), [1632](#)). Ici, nous montrons que les fonctions effectrices Fc-dépendantes du cocktail composé de quatre nnAbs peuvent être décuplées par l'introduction des mutations GASDALIE (G236A/S239D/A330L/I332E) dans leur portion Fc respective (**annexe VII**). Il pourrait être intéressant de tester l'effet de ce cocktail d'anticorps optimisé en combinaison avec les nouvelles générations de CD4mc sur la réduction des réservoirs du VIH-1 *in vivo*.

#### 7.6.4 Augmentation des niveaux de surface d'Env

L'expression d'Env à la surface des cellules infectées est restreinte par l'antagonisme de BST-2 par Vpu et par l'endocytose constitutive d'Env grâce au motif YXXΦ de sa queue cytoplasmique, ce qui participe à l'évasion des réponses humorales effectrices ([756](#), [757](#), [1099-1101](#), [1633](#), [1634](#)). Nous montrons que ces niveaux réduits d'Env limitent également la capacité des CD4mc à stimuler la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs (**article 11**). Étant donné que les niveaux d'Env exprimés lors de la réactivation des cellules réservoirs risquent également d'être limités, il faut élaborer des stratégies permettant d'augmenter significativement son exposition de surface afin de favoriser la reconnaissance des cellules infectées par les anticorps. Nos résultats démontrent qu'il est possible d'augmenter substantiellement les niveaux d'Env en stimulant l'expression de BST-2 à l'aide d'IFN-I ou d'IL-27 (**article 11**). De plus, de par leur effet délétère sur la polyfonctionnalité de Vpu, les IFN-I augmentent les niveaux de CD62L (**article 8**) et TIM-3 ([593](#)), tous deux ayant un rôle inhibiteur sur la relâche virale, ce qui pourrait également contribuer à l'augmentation d'Env ([209](#), [705](#)). Comme BST-2 peut être régulé à la hausse par d'autres molécules, comme l'IFN $\gamma$  ou un antagoniste de PPAR $\gamma$  ([1635-1637](#)), il serait intéressant de déterminer s'il existe un effet additif entre celles-ci et les IFN-I ainsi que l'IL-27 dans l'augmentation des niveaux d'Env. De manière intéressante, le traitement avec ces différentes cytokines (IFN $\alpha$ , IL-27 et IFN $\gamma$ ) est connu pour induire l'expression des facteurs de résistance de la famille GBP ([556](#), [1638](#)). Les molécules GBP2 et GBP5 agissent en tant qu'inhibiteurs de la furine, la protéase cellulaire nécessaire au clivage protéolytique du précurseur d'Env ([562](#), [563](#)). Comme nous avons montré que l'Env non-clivée adopte une conformation plus « ouverte » et plus sensible aux CD4mc (**article 6**), ces cytokines pourraient favoriser l'exposition des épitopes CD4i, contribuant ainsi à sensibiliser les cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs. D'autre part, il pourrait être envisageable d'augmenter Env par d'autres moyens, comme par l'inhibition pharmacologique des voies d'endocytose ou du bourgeonnement viral. Par exemple,

l'utilisation de l'inhibiteur de dynamine prochlorpérazine pourrait ralentir l'endocytose d'Env, qu'elle soit constitutive ou induite par les anticorps ([1101](#), [1102](#), [1639](#)), et augmenter la densité des antigènes de surface, tel que démontré dans des modèles de cancer ([1640](#)). De même, l'utilisation de l'inhibiteur de Tsg101 ilaprazole pourrait bloquer le bourgeonnement des particules virales à la surface par la machinerie ESCRT ([1641](#)). Néanmoins, des études de toxicité seraient nécessaires pour confirmer leur potentiel thérapeutique. Dans l'ensemble, l'inhibition du bourgeonnement, de la relâche virale ou des voies d'endocytose a le potentiel d'augmenter l'élimination des cellules infectées en présence de CD4mc et de nnAbs.

### 7.6.5 Inhibiteurs de Nef et Vpu

En plus de cibler Env, il pourrait également être intéressant de cibler d'autres protéines virales impliquées dans l'évasion de la réponse ADCC comme Nef et Vpu. Il n'existe toujours pas d'inhibiteurs autorisés de Nef ou Vpu, tandis qu'une seule molécule ciblant l'activité viroporine de Vpu (BIT225) est actuellement testée en essai clinique de phase II en combinaison avec ART ([1308](#), [1309](#)). Or, les résultats de cette étude n'ont démontré aucun effet de BIT225 sur la diminution de la charge virale du VIH-1 ([1308](#), [1309](#)). Cela est probablement explicable par le fait que la fonction de viroporine de Vpu ne semble pas particulièrement importante pour la réplication dans les lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> ou pour l'évasion immunitaire ([1305-1307](#)). Dans le contexte d'une stratégie thérapeutique, les inhibiteurs de protéines accessoires devraient idéalement être capable d'altérer des fonctions de Nef et Vpu liées à l'activité ADCC des nnAbs, c'est-à-dire la régulation négative de CD4 et des ligands de NKG2D par Nef ainsi que l'antagonisme de CD4, BST-2, NTB-A et PVR par Vpu (**articles 2, 3, 4, 8, 9 et 11**). Entre autres, il pourrait être intéressant d'évaluer l'effet d'inhibiteurs d'endocytose sur la régulation de CD4 par Nef. Comme Nef diminue l'expression de surface de CD4 par la voie d'endocytose dépendante de la clathrine, l'utilisation de l'inhibiteur de dynamine prochlorpérazine pourrait atténuer l'internalisation de CD4 et ainsi augmenter son interaction avec Env pour exposer les épitopes CD4i ([1640](#)). Autrement, le mécanisme sous-jacent à la suppression des ligands de NKG2D par Nef est largement inconnu et une meilleure caractérisation des motifs de Nef impliqués pourrait faciliter le développement d'inhibiteur ciblant spécifiquement cette fonction ([773](#), [1097](#)). Pour ce qui est de Vpu, un récent criblage à haut débit basé sur la capacité de Vpu à recruter la E3 ubiquitine ligase SCF<sup>βTrCP</sup> a permis d'identifier deux inhibiteurs inhibant complètement l'activité anti-CD4 de Vpu et

partiellement son activité anti-BST-2 (1642). Par conséquent, ces nouvelles molécules sont capables d'augmenter significativement la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs (1642). Toutefois, étant donné la variabilité de Vpu (1445, 1643), le spectre d'activité de ces molécules se limite pour l'instant à la souche NL4-3 utilisée lors du criblage (1642). Afin d'outrepasser cette limitation, certains ont suggéré l'utilisation du pevonedistat (MLN4924), un inhibiteur de la E3 ubiquitine ligase SCF<sup>βTrCP</sup> utilisé en essai clinique pour le traitement de différentes leucémies (1644-1647), afin d'affecter les fonctions de Vpu (1633). Dans les faits, le pevonedistat affecte majoritairement l'antagonisme de CD4 par Vpu, augmentant ainsi l'élimination des cellules infectées par les nnAbs (1633). Malgré un effet minimal sur l'activité anti-BST-2 de Vpu, cette étude a également révélé qu'un traitement combinant le pevonedistat et l'IFN $\alpha$  avait un effet synergique sur l'augmentation de BST-2 et d'Env à la surface des cellules infectées (1633). En lien avec nos résultats (**articles 8 et 11**), l'association du pevonedistat avec les IFN-I ou l'IL-27 pourrait permettre de cibler les deux domaines fonctionnels principaux de Vpu (son motif phosphosérine et son TMD) et ainsi affecter la régulation négative de CD4, BST-2, NTB-A et PVR simultanément, ce qui aurait comme effet d'augmenter considérablement la reconnaissance et la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC médiée par les nnAbs.

## 7.7 Conclusions

Les travaux présentés dans cette thèse ont permis d'établir que la conformation de l'Env du VIH-1 est le déterminant majeur dictant la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC. L'adoption de la conformation « ouverte » d'Env permet l'exposition d'épitopes conservés reconnus par les nnAbs présents chez les individus infectés ou vaccinés. Toutefois, la majorité des souches du VIH-1 en circulation préviennent la reconnaissance des cellules infectées par les nnAbs en stabilisant la conformation « fermée » d'Env grâce à ses domaines structuraux hautement conservés et à la dégradation du récepteur CD4 par les protéines accessoires Nef et Vpu. Cependant, la présence de polymorphismes naturels chez certaines souches du virus peut altérer la conformation d'Env et ainsi augmenter leur susceptibilité à la réponse ADCC, ce qui apporte une explication plausible à la modeste protection observée dans le seul essai vaccinal efficace contre la transmission du VIH-1. L'évasion de la réponse humorale dépend également de la capacité de Vpu à limiter les niveaux d'Env présents à la surface des cellules infectées et à réguler l'expression de ligands activateurs des cellules effectrices. Au courant de ces études, nous

avons développé des stratégies efficaces afin de contourner ces mécanismes viraux d'évasion immunitaire, notamment via l'utilisation de CD4mc capable d'induire l'adoption de la conformation « ouverte » d'Env et de cytokines capables d'affecter la polyfonctionnalité de Vpu. Ces résultats représentent des avancées majeures pour le développement d'approches immunothérapeutiques afin d'éradiquer les réservoirs viraux et dans l'optique d'une guérison fonctionnelle de l'infection par le VIH-1.



## **CHAPITRE VIII - RÉFÉRENCES**

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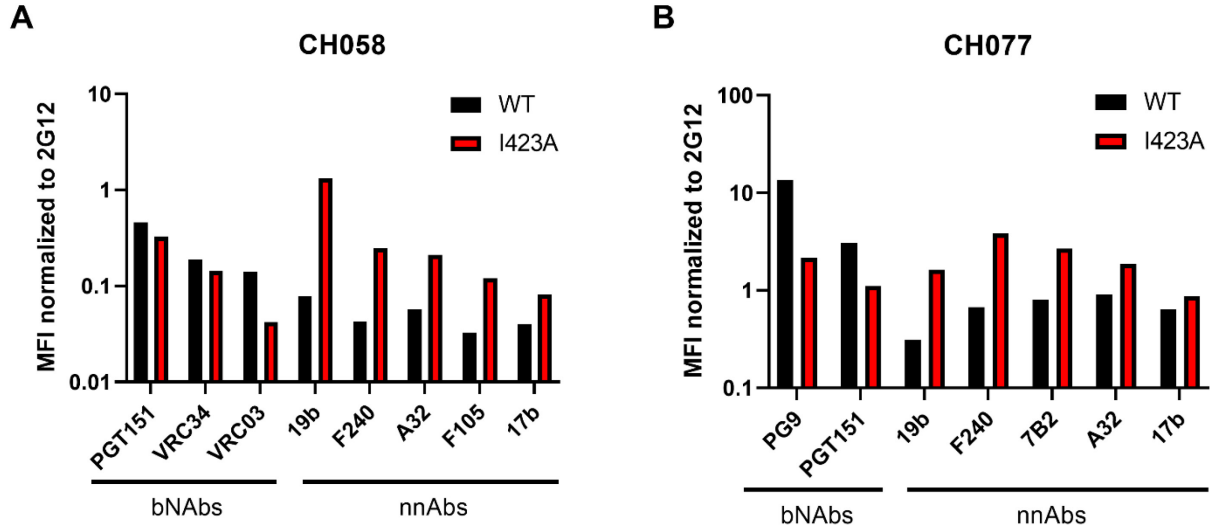
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## **CHAPITRE IX - ANNEXES**

## ANNEXE I

### Effet de la mutation I423A sur la conformation d'Env et la reconnaissance par les anticorps

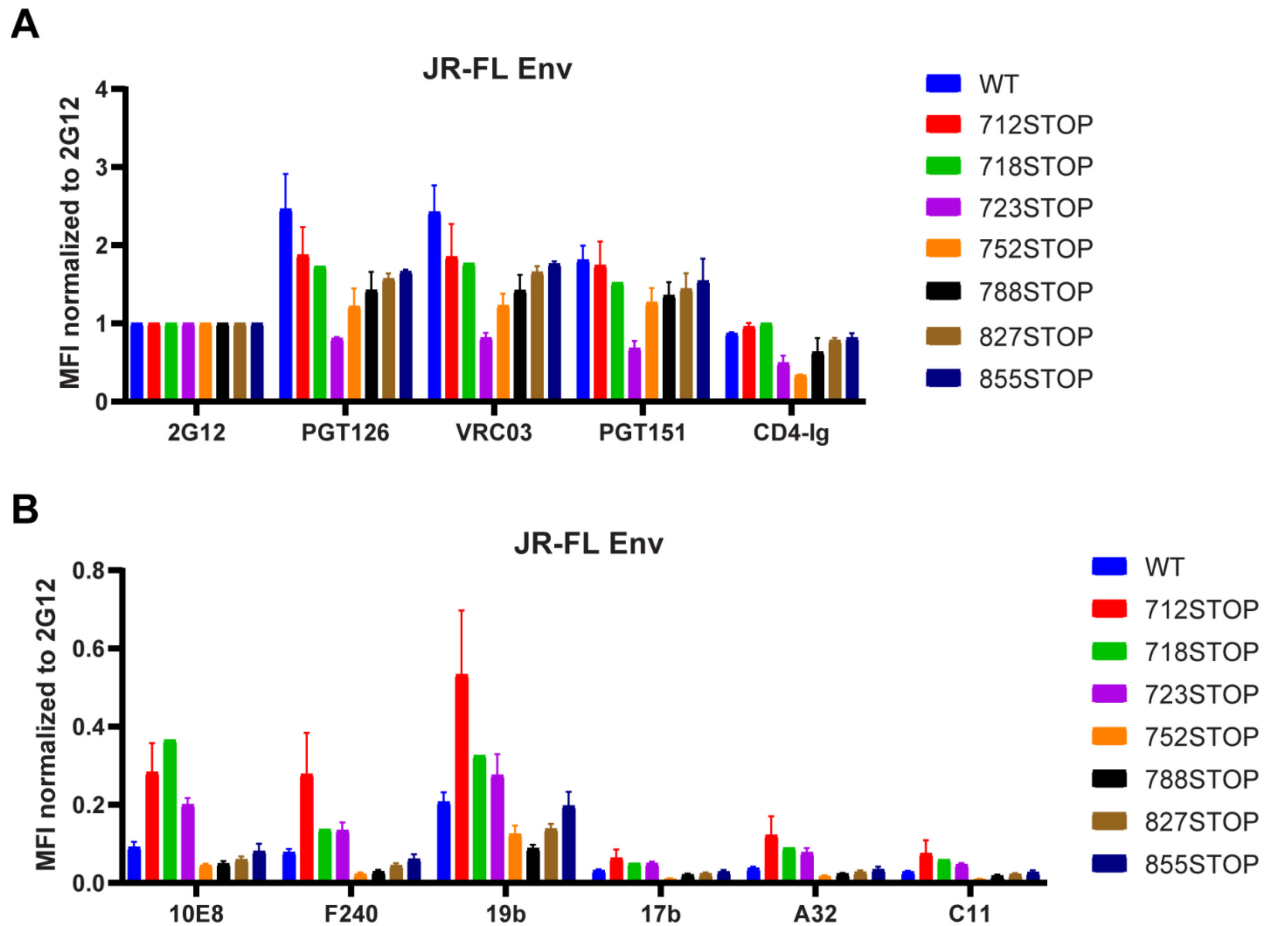


**Figure 9.1.1 - La mutation I423A dans l'enveloppe du VIH-1 expose les épitopes reconnus par les anticorps non-neutralisants.**

Des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> primaires ont été infectés avec les souches du VIH-1 (A) CH058 ou (B) CH077 de type sauvage (WT) ou ayant la mutation I423A dans la séquence d'Env. (A-B) Quarante-huit heures après l'infection, un marquage de surface a été fait en utilisant des anticorps neutralisants (2G12, PGT151, VRC34, VRC03, PG9) ou des anticorps non-neutralisants (19b, F240, 7B2, 17b, A32, F105). Les graphiques montrent les moyennes d'intensité de la fluorescence (MFI) obtenues pour une seule expérience.

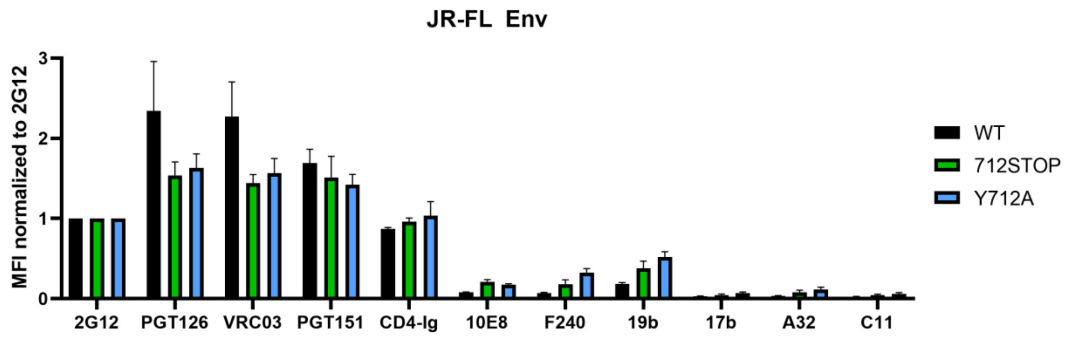
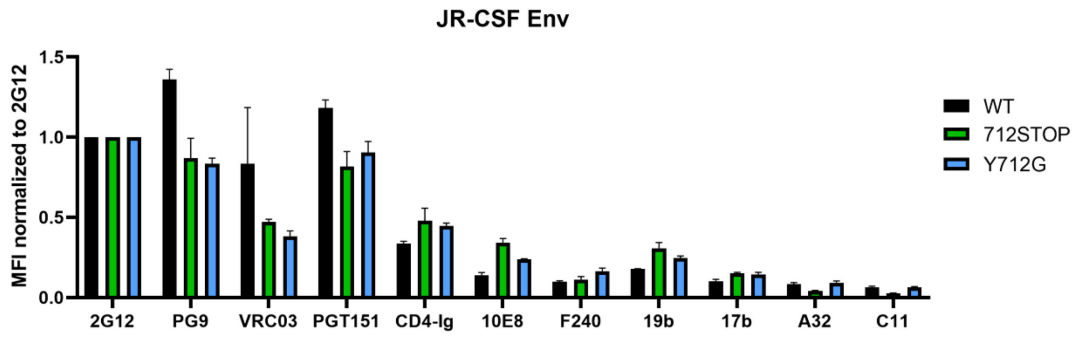
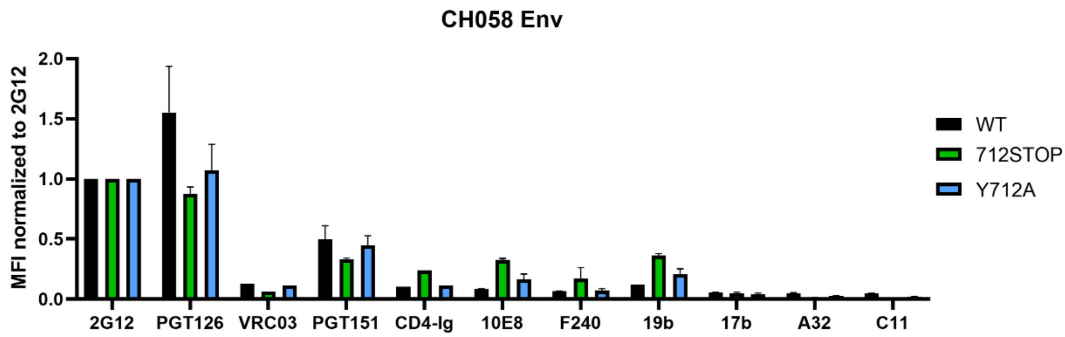
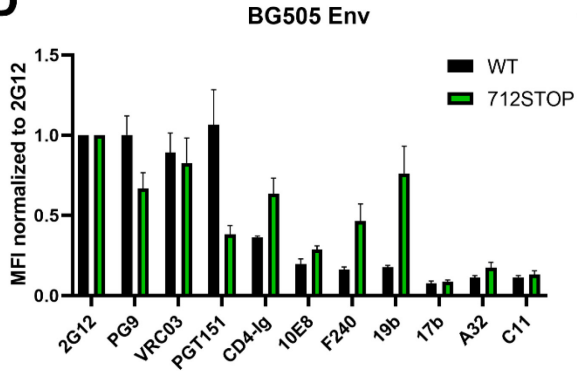
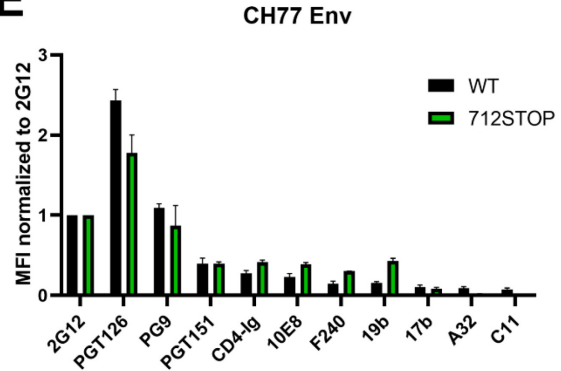
## ANNEXE II

### Rôle de la queue cytoplasmique d'Env dans la réponse ADCC contre les cellules infectées par le VIH-1



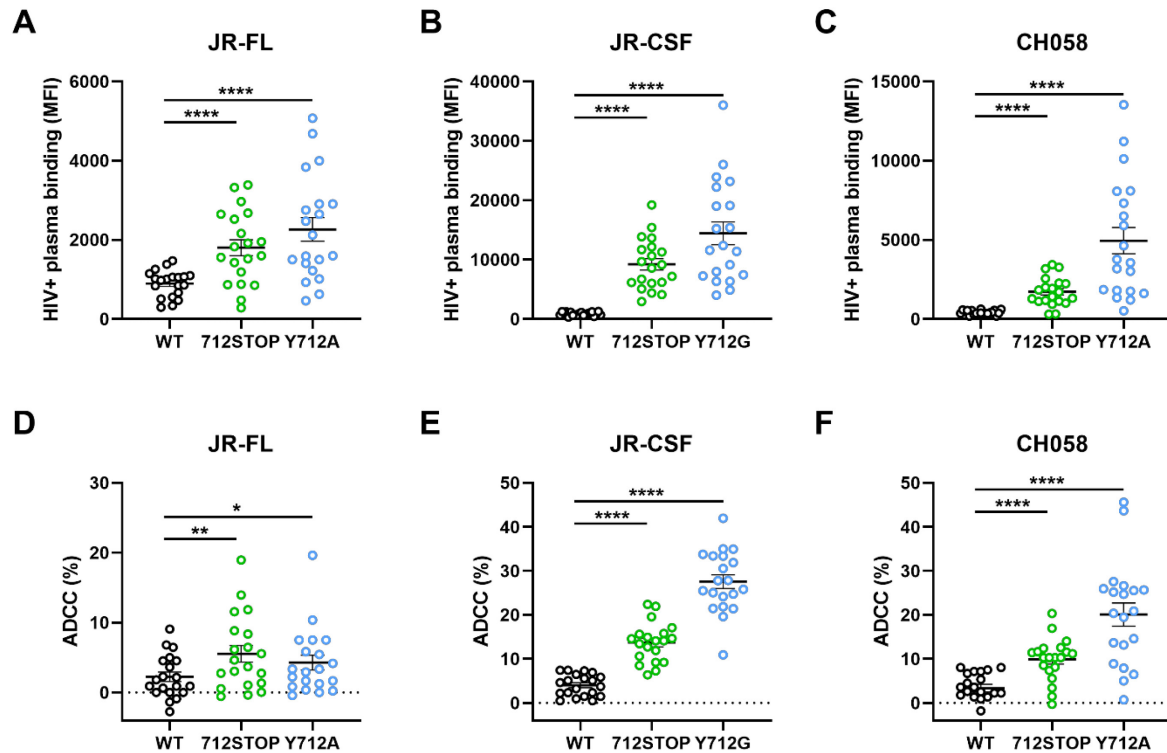
**Figure 9.2.1 - La queue cytoplasmique de l'enveloppe du VIH-1 module sa reconnaissance par des bNAbs et nnAbs.**

Des cellules HEK293T ont été co-transfectées avec un plasmide exprimant Env<sub>JR-FL</sub> ayant une troncation graduelle de la queue cytoplasmique et un plasmide exprimant la protéine GFP. Quarante-huit heures après la transfection, un marquage de surface a été fait en utilisant (A) des anticorps neutralisants (2G12, PGT126, VRC03, PGT151) ou la protéine de fusion CD4-Ig et (B) des anticorps préférant la conformation ouverte d'Env (10E8, F240, 19b, 17b, A32, C11). (A-B) Les graphiques montrent les moyennes d'intensité de la fluorescence (MFI) obtenues d'au moins 2 expériences indépendantes. Les barres d'erreur représentent la moyenne des données +/- l'écart-type de la moyenne.

**A****B****C****D****E**

**Figure 9.2.2 - Le motif d'endocytose de l'enveloppe du VIH-1 module son antigénicité.**

Des cellules HEK293T ont été co-transfectées avec un plasmide exprimant l'Env des souches du VIH-1 (A) JR-FL, (B) JR-CSF, (C) CH058, (D) BG505 ou (E) CH077 ayant une troncation de la queue cytoplasmique (712STOP) ou une mutation dans le motif d'endocytose (Y712A/G) ainsi qu'un plasmide exprimant la protéine GFP. Quarante-huit heures après la transfection, un marquage de surface a été fait en utilisant des anticorps neutralisants (2G12, PGT126, VRC03, PGT151), la protéine de fusion CD4-Ig et des anticorps préférant la conformation ouverte d'Env (10E8, F240, 19b, 17b, A32, C11). Les graphiques montrent les moyennes d'intensité de la fluorescence (MFI) obtenues d'au moins 2 expériences indépendantes. Les barres d'erreur représentent la moyenne des données +/- l'écart-type de la moyenne.

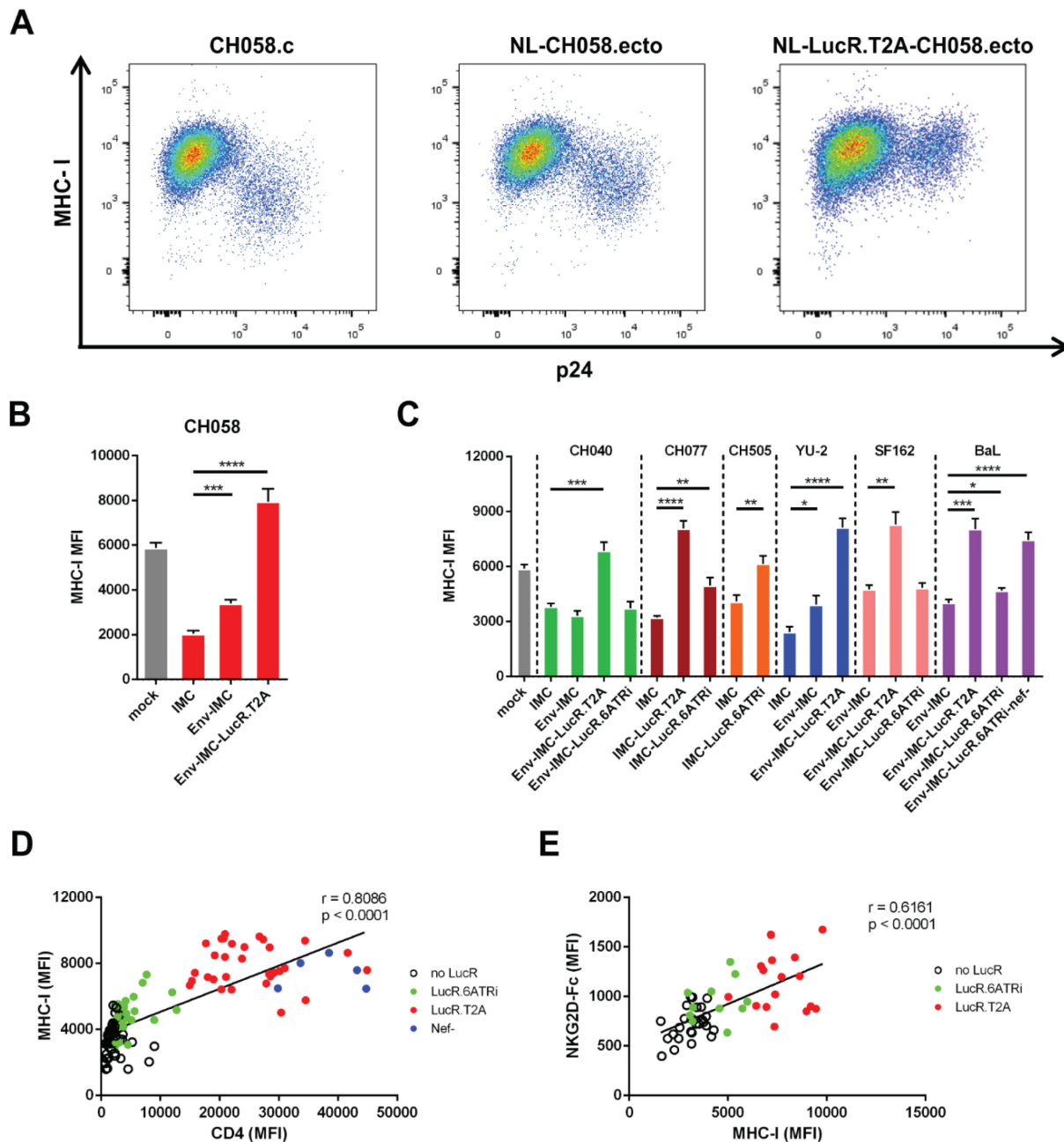


**Figure 9.2.3 - La queue cytoplasmique d'Env prévient la reconnaissance et l'élimination des cellules infectées par le plasma d'individus infectés.**

Des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> primaires ont été infectés avec les souches du VIH-1 (A,D) JR-FL, (B, E) JR-CSF ou (C,F) CH058 ayant une troncation de la queue cytoplasmique d'Env ( $\Delta$ CT) ou une mutation dans le motif d'endocytose (Y712A/G). (A-C) Quarante-huit heures après l'infection, un marquage de surface a été fait en utilisant 20 plasmas d'individus infectés par le VIH-1. Les graphiques montrent les moyennes d'intensité de la fluorescence (MFI). (D-F) La capacité de ces plasmas à induire l'élimination des cellules infectées par la réponse ADCC a également été mesurée en présence de cellules effectrices autologues. Ces résultats ont été obtenus à partir d'au moins trois expériences indépendantes. Les barres d'erreur représentent la moyenne des données +/- l'écart-type de la moyenne. L'analyse statistique a été faite en utilisant le test t de Student apparié (\*,  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*,  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*\*,  $p < 0.0001$ ).

### ANNEXE III

Absence de suppression des niveaux de surface du complexe d'histocompatibilité de classe I en utilisant des souches du VIH-1 comportant la cassette LucR.T2A



**Figure 9.3.1 – Impact de la stratégie d'insertion de l'élément LucR sur la régulation du CMH-I.**

Marquage de surface avec un anticorps contre HLA-A/B/C sur des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> primaires infectés avec des clones moléculaires du VIH-1 (IMC) exprimant différents souches d'Env (CH058, CH040, CH077, CH0505, YU2, SF162 et BaL) et exprimant ou non le rapporteur LucR. **(A)** Données brutes de cytométrie en flux montrant l'expression du CMH-I sur les cellules infectées (p24<sup>+</sup>) par les IMC de CH058. **(B-C)** Les graphiques montre les moyennes d'intensité de la fluorescence (MFI) obtenues avec des cellules d'au moins 5 donneurs sains différents. **(D-E)** Les niveaux d'expression du CMH-I sont corrélés avec la détection de **(D)** CD4 ou **(E)** de NKG2D-Fc à la surface des cellules infectées (p24<sup>+</sup>) à l'aide d'un test de corrélation de Pearson. Les barres d'erreur représentent la moyenne des données +/- l'écart-type de la moyenne. L'analyse statistique a été faite en utilisant le test t de Student (\*,  $p < 0.05$  ; \*\*,  $p < 0.01$  ; \*\*\*,  $p < 0.001$  ; \*\*\*\*,  $p < 0.0001$ ).



## ANNEXE IV

### Évolution d'une sélection de résidus d'Env et de fonctions de Nef et Vpu chez les différentes souches de VIH et de SIV

**Tableau 9.4.1 - Conservation de résidus d'Env pouvant affecter sa conformation et présence de la protéine accessoire Vpu chez les lentivirus infectant les primates.**

Virus	Env 375	Env 193	Env 423	Site de clivage polybasique (RXK/RR)	Motif d'endocytose YXXΦ	Vpu ou Vpx
VIH-1 M	S	L	I	REKR	YSPL	Vpu
SIVcpzPtt	H	L	I	REKR	YSPL	Vpu
VIH-1 N	M	L	I	REKR	YSPL	Vpu
SIVcpzPtt	M	L	I	REKR	YSPL	Vpu
VIH-1 O	H	L	V	REKR	YQPL	Vpu
VIH-1 P	H	L	V	RKCR	YSPV	Vpu
SIVgor	H	L	V	REKR	YSPL	Vpu
SIVcpzPts	W	L	I	RSKR	YMPL	Vpu
SIVmus2	W	I	F	VKAR	YSPL	Vpu
SIVmus1	W	I	F	VKAR	YSPL	Vpu
SIVgsn	W	I	F	VKCR	YSPL	Vpu
SIVmon	W	L/I	L/M	REKR	YSLL	Vpu
SIVden	R	M	L	RRRR	YSPL	Vpu
SIVdeb	W	M	L	RQKR	YSPL	aucun
SIVtal	W	A	M	KEKR	YLPL	aucun
SIVsyk	W	L	I	KQKR	YSPL	aucun
SIVagmSab	F	M	V	RQKR	YAPL	aucun
SIVagmTan	W	M	I	REKR	YFPL	aucun
SIVagmGri	W	M	V	REKR	YNPL	aucun
SIVagmVer	W	M	V	RQKR	YTPL	aucun
SIVrcm	W	M	I/V	KQKR	YTPL	Vpx
SIVmac	W	M	I	RNKR	YRPV	Vpx
SIVsmm	W	M	I	RNKR	YRPV	Vpx
VIH-2	W	M	I	RNKR	YRPV	Vpx
SIVdrl	M	V	I	RQKR	YRPL	Vpx
SIVmnd2	M	M	I	RQKR	YRPL	Vpx
SIVmnd1	M	M	I	KEKR	YRPV	aucun
SIVlho	M	M	I/V	RQKR	YRVL	aucun
SIVsun	M	M	V	KEKR	YRVL	aucun
SIVwrc	M	V/I	I	REKR	YSKL	aucun
SIVolc	M	M	N	RNKR	YVSL	aucun
SIVcol	F	M	L	RQKR	YLLV	aucun

**Tableau 9.4.2 - Régulation négative de protéines de l'hôte par les protéines accessoires Nef et Vpu encodées par le VIH-1, VIH-2 et les SIV étroitement liés.**

Virus	Vpu → CD4	Vpu → BST-2	Vpu → NTB-A	Vpu → PVR	Nef → CD4	Nef → BST-2	Nef → PVR
VIH-1 M	<b>oui</b>	<b>oui</b>	<b>oui</b>	<b>oui</b>	<b>oui</b>	<b>non</b>	<b>oui</b>
VIH-1 N	non	<b>oui</b>	non	non	<b>oui</b>	<b>non</b>	non
SIVcpzPtt	<b>oui</b>	non	<b>oui</b>	non	<b>oui</b>	oui	<b>oui</b>
VIH-1 O	<b>oui</b>	non	n.d.	n.d.	<b>oui</b>	oui	n.d.
VIH-1 P	<b>oui</b>	non	n.d.	non	<b>oui</b>	<b>non</b>	non
SIVgor	<b>oui</b>	non	<b>oui</b>	non	<b>oui</b>	oui	<b>oui</b>
SIVcpzPts	<b>oui</b>	non	<b>oui</b>	n.d.	<b>oui</b>	oui	n.d.
SIVgsn	<b>oui</b>	<b>oui</b>	<b>oui</b>	non	<b>oui</b>	<b>non</b>	non
VIH-2	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	<b>oui</b>	<b>non*</b>	non
SIVmac	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	<b>oui</b>	oui	non
SIVsmm	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	<b>oui</b>	oui	n.d.

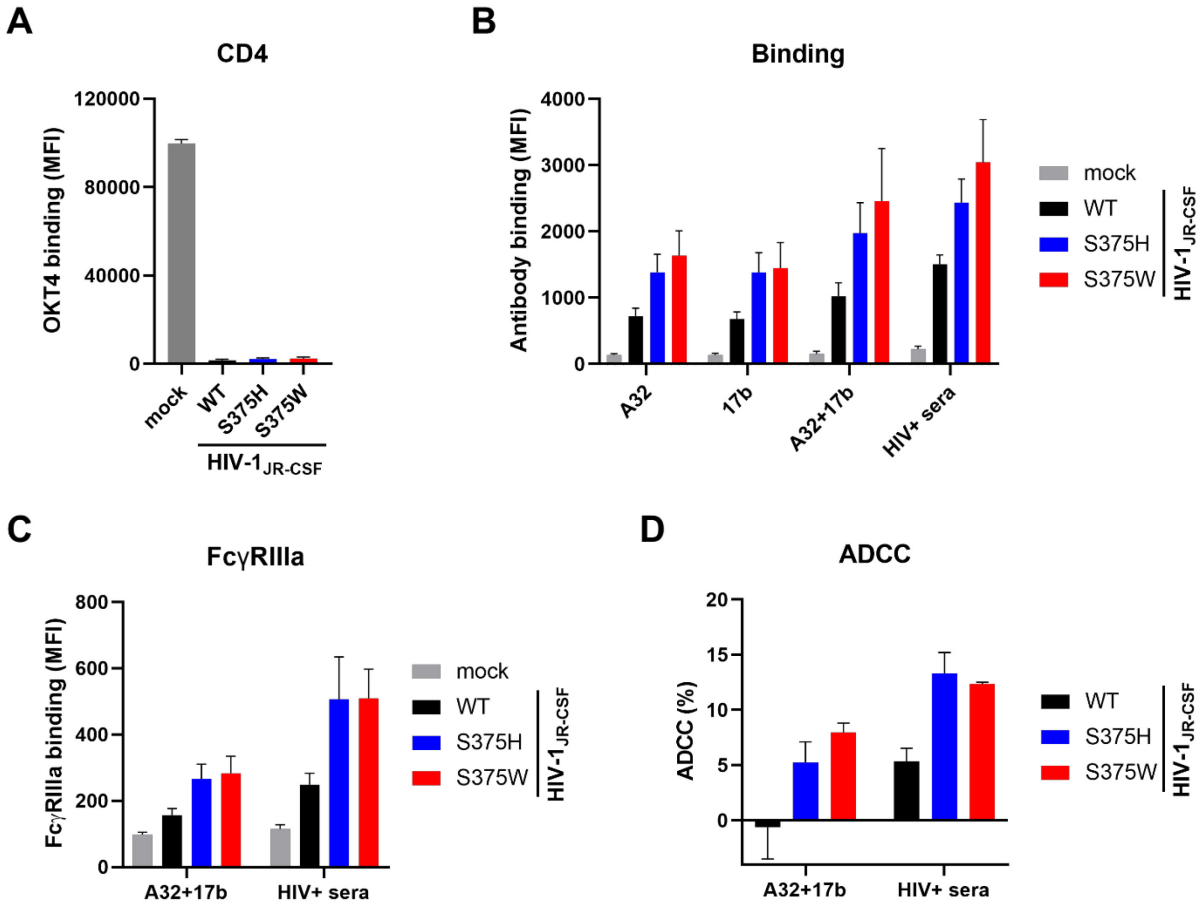
\*La régulation négative de BST-2 par le VIH-2 est médiée par Env

N/A : non applicable (absence de Vpu)

n.d. : donnée non disponible

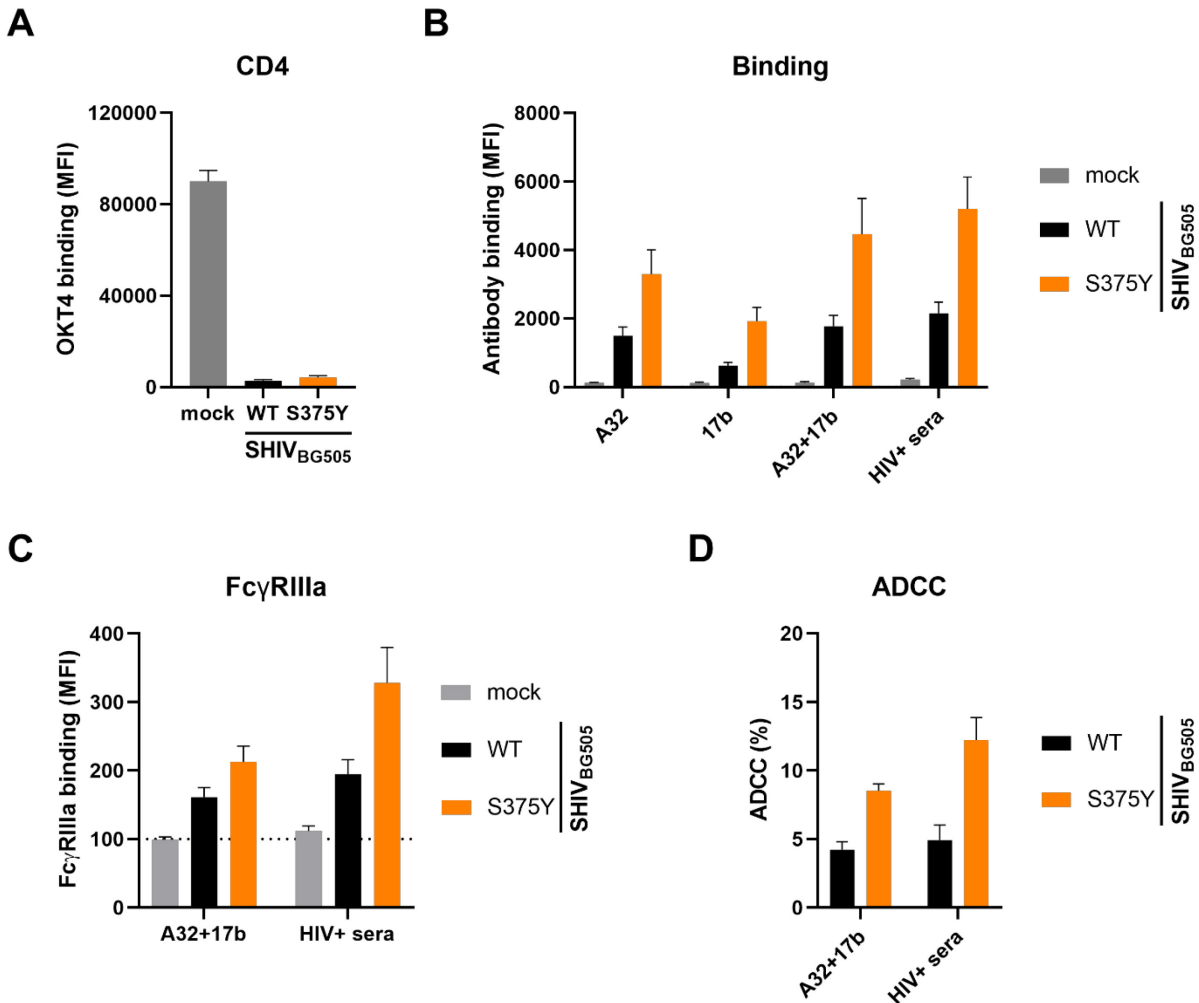
## ANNEXE V

### Influence de la cavité Phe43 de l'enveloppe du VIH-1 sur la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC



**Figure 9.5.1 – La cavité Phe43 module la reconnaissance et l'élimination par ADCC des cellules infectées par un isolat du VIH-1 fréquemment utilisé dans les modèles de souris humanisées.**

Des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> primaires (mock) ont été infectés avec la souche du VIH-1 JR-CSF de type sauvage (WT) ou ayant une mutation du résidu 375 dans la séquence d'Env (S375H, S375W). 48h après l'infection, les cellules ont subi un marquage de surface total avec (A) un anticorps contre CD4 (OKT4) ainsi que (B) des anticorps monoclonaux (A32, 17b) ou du sérum de patients infectés par le VIH-1 (HIV<sup>+</sup> sera) reconnaissant l'enveloppe du VIH-1. (C) Alternativement, les cellules marquées avec les anticorps contre Env ont été détectées à l'aide d'une protéine de FcγRIIIa dimérique soluble. (D) La susceptibilité des cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC en présence de cellules effectrices autologues a été évaluée par cytométrie en flux. (A-D) Les graphiques montrent les moyennes d'intensité de la fluorescence (MFI) et les pourcentages (%) d'ADCC obtenus dans trois expériences indépendantes. Les barres d'erreur représentent la moyenne des données +/- l'écart-type de la moyenne.

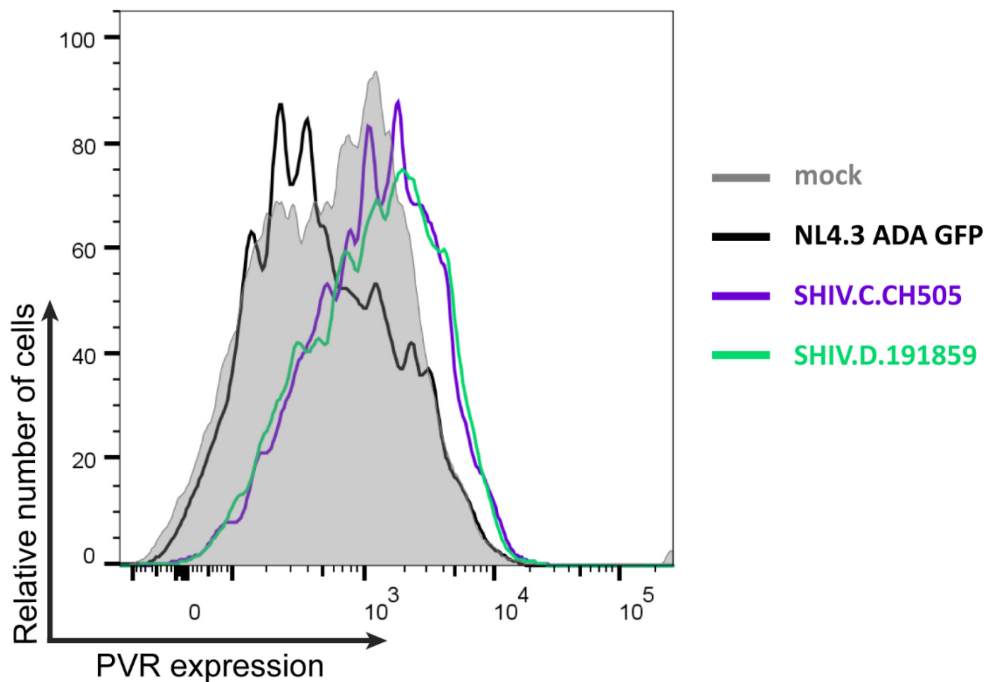


**Figure 9.5.2 – La cavité Phe43 module la reconnaissance et l'élimination par ADCC des cellules infectées par un SHIV fréquemment utilisé dans les modèles de primates non-humains.**

Des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> primaires (mock) ont été infectés avec la souche du SHIV BG505 de type sauvage (WT) ou ayant une mutation du résidu 375 dans la séquence d'Env (S375Y). 48h après l'infection, les cellules ont subi un marquage de surface total avec (A) un anticorps contre CD4 (OKT4) ainsi que (B) des anticorps monoclonaux (A32, 17b) ou du sérum de patients infectés par le VIH-1 (HIV<sup>+</sup> sera) reconnaissant l'enveloppe du VIH-1. (C) Alternativement, les cellules marquées avec les anticorps contre Env ont été détectées à l'aide d'une protéine de FcγRIIIa dimérique soluble. (D) La susceptibilité des cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC en présence de cellules effectrices autologues a été évaluée par cytométrie en flux. (A-D) Les graphiques montrent les moyennes d'intensité de la fluorescence (MFI) et les pourcentages (%) d'ADCC obtenus dans cinq expériences indépendantes. Les barres d'erreur représentent la moyenne des données +/- l'écart-type de la moyenne.

## ANNEXE VI

### Régulation d'un ligand activateur des cellules NK par les SHIV de nouvelle génération

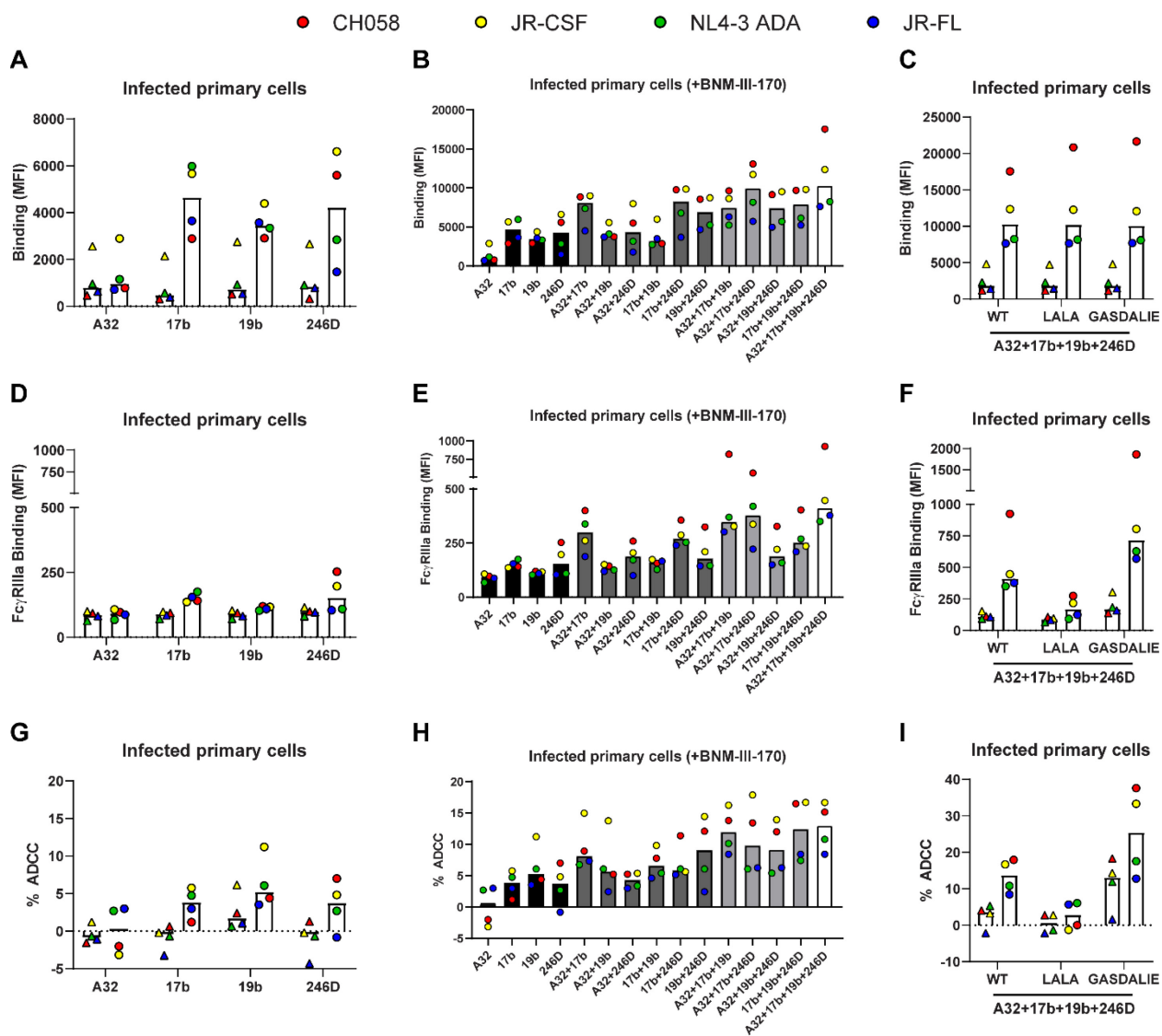


**Figure 9.6.1 – Absence de régulation négative du ligand activateur PVR par les SHIV.**

Marquage de surface avec un anticorps contre PVR sur des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> primaires infectés avec des clones moléculaires du VIH-1 (NL4.3 ADA GFP) ou de SHIV (SHIV.C.CH505 et SHIV.D.191859). Histogramme de cytométrie en flux montrant l'expression de PVR sur des cellules non-infectées (mock) ou infectées par le VIH-1 ou un SHIV (Gag+). Ce graphique montre des données provenant d'une seule expérience.

## ANNEXE VII

### Développement de nouvelles combinaisons d'anticorps non-neutralisants pour éliminer les cellules infectées par le VIH-1 via la réponse ADCC



**Figure 9.7.1 - La combinaison d'anticorps non-neutralisants de différentes spécificités augmente la réponse anticorps en présence de CD4mc.**

Des lymphocytes T CD4<sup>+</sup> primaires ont été infectés avec différents isolats du VIH-1 de clade B (CH058, JR-CSF, NL4.3 ADA, JR-FL). 48h après l'infection, nous avons fait un marquage de surface total (A-C), un marquage Fc $\gamma$ RIIIa (D-F) ou nous avons quantifié la susceptibilité des cellules infectées à la réponse ADCC en présence de cellules effectrices (G-I) par cytométrie en flux. Pour ce faire, nous avons utilisé (A,D,G) des anticorps non-neutralisants (A32, 17b, 19b, 246D) en présence du CD4mc BNM-III-170 (cercle) ou du solvant (DMSO; triangle), des combinaisons de plusieurs anticorps non-neutralisants en présence de CD4mc (B,E,H) ou encore des combinaisons d'anticorps non-neutralisants ayant des mutations dans la partie Fc (LALA ou GASDALIE) en présence de CD4mc (C,F,I).

## ANNEXE VIII

### Liste des articles additionnels auxquels le candidat a contribué

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## ANNEXE IX

### Liste des présentations orales et par affiche

1. **Prévost J**, Debbeche O, Coutu M, Finzi A. *A Highly Conserved gp120 Inner Domain Residue Modulates Interaction with CD4 and Conformation Changes*. Journée des étudiants du réseau SIDA/MI du FRSQ, Montréal, Québec, Canada (30 octobre 2015).
2. **Prévost J**, Debbeche O, Coutu M, Finzi A. *A Highly Conserved gp120 Inner Domain Residue Modulates Interaction with CD4 and Conformation Changes*. 4<sup>e</sup> journée de la recherche du département de Microbiologie, Infectiologie et Immunologie de l'Université de Montréal, Montréal, Québec, Canada (16 mars 2016).
3. **Prévost J**, Ding S, Tolbert WD, Coutu M, Debbeche O, Xiang SH, Pazgier M, Finzi A. *A Highly Conserved gp120 Inner Domain Residue Modulates Env Conformation and Trimer Stability*. Cold Spring Harbor meeting on Retroviruses, New York, NY, USA (23-28 mai 2016).
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5. **Prévost J**, Ding S, Tolbert WD, Pacheco B, Coutu M, Debbeche O, Xiang SH, Pazgier M, Finzi A. *A Highly Conserved gp120 Inner Domain Residue Modulates Env Conformation and Trimer Stability*. Journée des étudiants, stagiaires et résidents du réseau SIDA/MI du FRSQ, Montréal, Québec, Canada (4 novembre 2016).  
**\*Présentation orale**
6. **Prévost J**, Ding S, Tolbert WD, Pacheco B, Coutu M, Debbeche O, Xiang SH, Pazgier M, Finzi A. *A Highly Conserved gp120 Inner Domain Residue Modulates Env Conformation and Trimer Stability*. 50<sup>e</sup> congrès COPSE des stagiaires de recherche du 1<sup>er</sup> cycle à la Faculté de Médecine, Montréal, Québec, Canada (27 janvier 2016).  
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7. **Prévost J**, Zoubchenok D, Richard J, Veillette M, Pacheco B, Coutu M, Brassard N, Parsons MS, Ruxrungtham K, Bunupuradah T, Tovanabuttra S, Hwang KK, Moody MA, Haynes BF, Bonsignori M, Sodroski J, Kaufmann DE, Shaw GM, Chenine AL, Finzi A. *Influence of the Envelope gp120 Phe 43 Cavity on HIV-1 Sensitivity to Antibody-Dependent Cell-Mediated Cytotoxicity Responses*. The 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research, Montréal, Québec, Canada (6-9 avril 2017).  
**\*Présentation orale**  
**\*\*Bourse de voyage**



8. **Prévost J**, Zoubchenok D, Richard J, Veillette M, Pacheco B, Coutu M, Brassard N, Parsons MS, Ruxrungtham K, Bunupuradah T, Tovanabutra S, Hwang KK, Moody MA, Haynes BF, Bonsignori M, Sodroski J, Kaufmann DE, Shaw GM, Chenine AL, Finzi A. *Influence of the Envelope gp120 Phe 43 Cavity on HIV-1 Sensitivity to Antibody-Dependent Cell-Mediated Cytotoxicity Responses*. 19<sup>e</sup> congrès des étudiants, stagiaires et résidents du CRCHUM, Montréal, Québec, Canada (4 mai 2017).  
\***Prix d'excellence**
  
9. **Prévost J**, Zoubchenok D, Richard J, Veillette M, Pacheco B, Coutu M, Brassard N, Parsons MS, Ruxrungtham K, Bunupuradah T, Tovanabutra S, Hwang KK, Moody MA, Haynes BF, Bonsignori M, Sodroski J, Kaufmann DE, Shaw GM, Chenine AL, Finzi A. *Influence of the Envelope gp120 Phe 43 Cavity on HIV-1 Sensitivity to Antibody-Dependent Cell-Mediated Cytotoxicity Responses*. Cold Spring Harbor meeting on Retroviruses, New York, NY, USA (22-27 mai 2017).
  
10. **Prévost J**, Zoubchenok D, Richard J, Veillette M, Pacheco B, Coutu M, Brassard N, Parsons MS, Ruxrungtham K, Bunupuradah T, Tovanabutra S, Hwang KK, Moody MA, Haynes BF, Bonsignori M, Sodroski J, Kaufmann DE, Shaw GM, Chenine AL, Finzi A. *Influence of the Envelope gp120 Phe 43 Cavity on HIV-1 Sensitivity to Antibody-Dependent Cell-Mediated Cytotoxicity Responses*. Duke Center for HIV/AIDS Vaccine Immunology and Immunogen Design (CHAVI-ID) annual meeting, Durham, NC, USA (1-4 octobre 2017).  
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11. **Prévost J**, Zoubchenok D, Richard J, Veillette M, Pacheco B, Coutu M, Brassard N, Parsons MS, Ruxrungtham K, Bunupuradah T, Tovanabutra S, Hwang KK, Moody MA, Haynes BF, Bonsignori M, Sodroski J, Kaufmann DE, Shaw GM, Chenine AL, Finzi A. *Influence of the Envelope gp120 Phe 43 Cavity on HIV-1 Sensitivity to Antibody-Dependent Cell-Mediated Cytotoxicity Responses*. 5<sup>e</sup> journée de la recherche du département de Microbiologie, Infectiologie et Immunologie de l'Université de Montréal, Montréal, Québec, Canada (13 octobre 2017).  
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12. **Prévost J**, Richard J, Ding S, Pacheco B, Medjahed H, Brassard N, Hahn BH, Kaufmann DE, Finzi A. *Envelope Glycoproteins Sampling States 2/3 are Susceptible to ADCC mediated by sera from HIV-1- infected Individuals*. 8<sup>e</sup> journée scientifique annuelle du CRCHUM, Montréal, Québec, Canada (26 octobre 2017).
  
13. **Prévost J**, Zoubchenok D, Richard J, Veillette M, Pacheco B, Coutu M, Brassard N, Parsons MS, Ruxrungtham K, Bunupuradah T, Tovanabutra S, Hwang KK, Moody MA, Haynes BF, Bonsignori M, Sodroski J, Kaufmann DE, Shaw GM, Chenine AL, Finzi A. *Influence of the Envelope gp120 Phe 43 Cavity on HIV-1 Sensitivity to Antibody-Dependent Cell-Mediated*

*Cytotoxicity Responses*. Journée des étudiants, stagiaires et résidents du réseau SIDA/MI du FRSQ, Montréal, Québec, Canada (10 novembre 2017).

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14. **Prévost J**, Richard J, Ding S, Pacheco B, Medjahed H, Brassard N, Hahn BH, Kaufmann DE, Finzi A. *Envelope Glycoproteins Sampling States 2/3 are Susceptible to ADCC mediated by sera from HIV-1- infected Individuals*. Keystone Symposia: Progress and Pathways Toward an Effective HIV Vaccine, Banff, Alberta, Canada (28 janvier – 2 février 2018).
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  20. **Prévost J**, Tolbert WD, Sherburn R, Madani N, Medjahed H, Zoubchenok D, Gendron-Lepage G, Kirk S, Mann BT, Chénine AG, Kirchhoff F, Hahn BH, Abrams CF, Smith III AB, Sodroski J, Pazgier M, Finzi A. *A Complex Interplay Between the HIV-1 Env gp120 Inner Domain and the Phe43 Cavity Modulates Its Sensitivity to Small CD4-Mimetic Compounds*. Keystone Symposia: Functional Cures and the Eradication of HIV, Whistler, BC, Canada (24-28 mars 2019).
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24. **Prévost J**, Tolbert WD, Sherburn R, Madani N, Medjahed H, Zoubchenok D, Gendron-Lepage G, Kirk S, Mann BT, Chénine AG, Kirchhoff F, Hahn BH, Abrams CF, Smith III AB, Sodroski J, Pazgier M, Finzi A. *A Complex Interplay Between the HIV-1 Env gp120 Inner Domain and the Phe43 Cavity Modulates Its Sensitivity to Small CD4-Mimetic Compounds*. National Institute of General Medical Sciences Structural Biology Related to HIV/AIDS meeting, Bethesda, MD, USA (27-28 juin 2019).
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27. **Prévost J**, Tolbert WD, Medjahed H, Sherburn R, Madani N, Zoubchenok D, Gendron-Lepage G, Gaffney AE, Grenier MC, Kirk S, Vergara N, Han C, Mann BT, Chénine AL, Ahmed A, Chaiken I, Kirchhoff F, Hahn BH, Haim H, Abrams CF, Smith 3rd AB, Sodroski JG, Pazgier M, Finzi A. *A Complex Interplay Between the HIV-1 Env gp120 Inner Domain and the Phe43*

*Cavity Modulates Its Sensitivity to Small CD4-Mimetic Compounds*. The 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research, conférence virtuelle (30 avril – 3 mai 2020).

28. **Prévost J**, Medjahed H, Smith, III AB, Finzi A. *Env Proteolytic Cleavage Protects HIV-1-Infected Cells from ADCC Mediated by Non-neutralizing Antibodies*. The 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research, conférence virtuelle (30 avril – 3 mai 2020).
29. **Prévost J**, Tolbert WD, Medjahed H, Sherburn RT, Madani N, Zoubchenok D, Gendron-Lepage G, Vergara N, Han C, Chénine AL, Kirchhoff F, Hahn BH, Haim H, Abrams CF, Smith III AB, Sodroski J, Pazgier M, Finzi A. *The HIV-1 Env gp120 inner domain shapes the Phe43 cavity and the CD4-binding site*. Cold Spring Harbor meeting on Retroviruses, conférence virtuelle (18-21 mai 2020).
30. **Prévost J**, Medjahed H, Hahn BH, Smith III AB, Finzi A. *Env proteolytic cleavage protects HIV-1-infected cells from ADCC mediated by non-neutralizing antibodies*. Cold Spring Harbor meeting on Retroviruses, conférence virtuelle (18-21 mai 2020).
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**\*Présentation orale**  
**\*\*Prix d'excellence**
32. **Prévost J**, Gasser R, Beaudoin-Bussièrès G, Richard J, Duerr R, Laumaea A, Anand SP, Goyette G, Benlarbi M, Ding S, Medjahed H, Lewin A, Perreault J, Tremblay T, Gendron-Lepage G, Gauthier N, Carrier M, Marcoux D, Piché A, Lavoie M, Benoit A, Loungnarath V, Brochu G, Haddad E, Stacey HD, Miller MS, Desforges M, Talbot PJ, Gould Maule GT, Côté M, Therrien C, Serhir B, Bazin R, Roger M, Finzi A. *Cross-sectional evaluation of humoral responses against SARS-CoV-2 Spike*. CITAC-CSCI Annual General Meeting: Young Investigators forum, conférence virtuelle (12-13 novembre 2020).
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34. Ullah I, **Prévost J**, Ladinsky MS, Stone H, Lu M, Anand SP, Beaudoin-Bussièrès G, Benlarbi M, Ding S, Gasser R, Fink C, Chen Y, Tauzin A, Goyette G, Bourassa C, Medjahed H, Mack M, Chung K, Wilen CB, Dekaban GA, Dikeakos JD, Bruce EA, Kaufmann DE, Stamatatos L,

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35. **Prévost J**, Rajashekar JK, Anand SP, Richard J, Goyette G, Medjahed H, Gendron-Lepage G, Zolla-Pazner S, Smith III AB, Pazgier M, Nussenzweig MC, Kumar P, Finzi A. *HIV-1 Vpu limits Fc-mediated effector functions in vivo*. Cold Spring Harbor meeting on Retroviruses, conférence virtuelle (25-28 mai 2021).

**\*Présentation orale**

36. **Prévost J**, Rajashekar JK, Anand SP, Richard J, Goyette G, Medjahed H, Gendron-Lepage G, Zolla-Pazner S, Smith III AB, Pazgier M, Nussenzweig MC, Kumar P, Finzi A. *HIV-1 Vpu limits Fc-mediated effector functions in vivo*. Keystone eSymposia: HIV Vaccines, conférence virtuelle (1-4 juin 2021).

**\*Bourse d'inscription**

37. **Prévost J**, Richard J, Medjahed H, Gasser R, Gendron-Lepage G, Hahn BH, Shaw GM, Herschhorn A, Sodroski J, Smith III AB, Pazgier M, Mothes W, Finzi A. *Temsavir protects uninfected bystander cells from ADCC responses*. Keystone eSymposia: HIV Pathogenesis and Cure, conférence virtuelle (1-4 juin 2021).

38. **Prévost J**. *Réponses humorales et cellulaires contre la glycoprotéine S du SARS-CoV-2*. 4<sup>e</sup> édition de la semaine Innove-action du CHUM, conférence virtuelle, Montréal, QC, Canada (15-17 juin 2021).

**\*Conférencier invité**

39. **Prévost J**, Anand SP, Rajashekar JK, Richard J, Goyette G, Medjahed H, Gendron-Lepage G, Chen HC, Horwitz JA, Zolla-Pazner S, Burton DR, Kirchhoff F, Hahn BH, Smith III AB, Pazgier M, Nussenzweig MC, Kumar P, Finzi A. *HIV-1 Vpu limits Fc-mediated effector functions in vivo*. AIDS 2022, the 24th International AIDS Conference, Montréal, QC, Canada (29 juillet au 2 août 2022).

## ANNEXE X

### Autorisations d'utiliser des documents protégés par le droit d'auteur

#### CHAPITRE I

1. Richard J\*, **Prévost J\***, Alshafiq N, Ding S, Finzi A. *Impact of HIV-1 Envelope Conformation on ADCC Responses*. Trends Microbiol. 2018 Apr;26(4):253-265.  
\*contribution égale

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#### CHAPITRE II

2. Richard J, **Prévost J**, Baxter AE, von Bredow B, Ding S, Medjahed H, Delgado GG, Brassard N, Stürzel CM, Kirchhoff F, Hahn BH, Parsons MS, Kaufmann DE, Evans DT, Finzi A. *Uninfected Bystander Cells Impact the Measurement of HIV-Specific Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity Responses*. mBio. 2018 Mar 20;9(2).

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3. **Prévost J**, Richard J, Medjahed H, Alexander A, Jones J, Kappes JC, Ochsenbauer C, Finzi A. *Incomplete Downregulation of CD4 Expression Affects HIV-1 Env Conformation and Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity Responses*. J Virol. 2018 Jun 13;92(13).

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4. **Prévost J\***, Richard J\*, Gasser R, Medjahed H, Kirchhoff F, Hahn BH, Kappes JC, Ochsenbauer C, Duerr R, Finzi A. *Detection of the HIV-1 accessory proteins Nef and Vpu*

*by flow cytometry represents a new tool to study their functional interplay within a single infected CD4<sup>+</sup> T cell.* J Virol. 2022 Jan 26;jvi0192921. \*contribution égale

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### CHAPITRE III

5. **Prévost J**, Richard J, Ding S, Pacheco B, Charlebois R, Hahn BH, Kaufmann DE, Finzi A. *Envelope glycoproteins sampling states 2/3 are susceptible to ADCC by sera from HIV-1-infected individuals.* Virology. 2018 Feb;515:38-45.

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6. **Prévost J**, Medjahed H, Vézina D, Chen HC, Hahn BH, Smith AB, III, Finzi A. *HIV-1 envelope glycoproteins proteolytic cleavage protects infected cells from ADCC mediated by plasma from infected individuals.* Viruses. 2021 Nov 6;13(11):2236.

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7. **Prévost J**, Zoubchenok D, Richard J, Veillette M, Pacheco B, Coutu M, Brassard N, Parsons MS, Ruxrungtham K, Bunupuradah T, Tovanabutra S, Hwang KK, Moody MA, Haynes BF, Bonsignori M, Sodroski J, Kaufmann DE, Shaw GM, Chenine AL, Finzi A. *Influence of the Envelope gp120 Phe43 Cavity on HIV-1 Sensitivity to Antibody-Dependent Cell-Mediated Cytotoxicity Responses.* J Virol. 2017 Mar 13;91(7).

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#### CHAPITRE IV

8. **Prévost J**, Pickering S, Mumby MJ, Medjahed H, Gendron-Lepage G, Delgado GG, Dirk BS, Dikeakos JD, Stürzel CM, Sauter D, Kirchhoff F, Bibollet-Ruche F, Hahn BH, Dubé M, Kaufmann DE, Neil SJD, Finzi A, Richard J. *Upregulation of BST-2 by Type I Interferons Reduces the Capacity of Vpu to Protect HIV-1-Infected Cells from NK Cell Responses*. mBio. 2019 Jun 18;10(3).

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9. **Prévost J**, Anand SP, Rajashekar JK, Richard J, Goyette G, Medjahed H, Gendron-Lepage G, Chen HC, Chen Y, Horwitz JA, Grunst MW, Zolla-Pazner S, Haynes BF, Burton DR, Flavell RA, Kirchhoff F, Hahn BH, Smith AB, III, Pazgier M, Nussenzweig MC, Kumar P, Finzi A. *HIV-1 Vpu restricts Fc-mediated effector functions in vivo*. Cell Rep. 2022 Nov 8;41(6):111624.

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#### CHAPITRE V

10. **Prévost J**, Tolbert WD, Medjahed H, Sherburn RT, Madani N, Zoubchenok D, Gendron-Lepage G, Gaffney AE, Grenier MC, Kirk S, Vergara N, Han C, Mann BT, Chénine AL, Ahmed A, Chaiken I, Kirchhoff F, Hahn BH, Haim H, Abrams CF, Smith AB, III, Sodroski J, Pazgier M, Finzi A. *The HIV-1 Env gp120 Inner Domain Shapes the Phe43 Cavity and the CD4 Binding Site*. mBio. 2020 May 26;11(3):e00280-20.



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11. Richard J, **Prévost J**, von Bredow B, Ding S, Brassard N, Medjahed H, Coutu M, Melillo B, Bibollet-Ruche F, Hahn BH, Kaufmann DE, Smith AB, III, Sodroski J, Sauter D, Kirchhoff F, Gee K, Neil SJ, Evans DT, Finzi A. *BST-2 Expression Modulates Small CD4-Mimetic Sensitization of HIV-1-Infected Cells to Antibody-Dependent Cellular Cytotoxicity*. J Virol. 2017 May 12;91(11).

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