Thymic CD8+ T Cell Production Strongly Influences Tumor Antigen Recognition and Age-Dependent Glioma Mortality

Christopher J. Wheeler, Keith L. Black, Gentao Liu, Han Ying, John S. Yu, Wenxuan Zhang and Paul K. Lee

*J Immunol* 2003; 171:4927-4933; doi: 10.4049/jimmunol.171.9.4927
http://www.jimmunol.org/content/171/9/4927

**References** This article cites 32 articles, 12 of which you can access for free at:
http://www.jimmunol.org/content/171/9/4927.full#ref-list-1

**Subscription** Information about subscribing to *The Journal of Immunology* is online at:
http://jimmunol.org/subscription

**Permissions** Submit copyright permission requests at:
http://www.aai.org/About/Publications/JI/copyright.html

**Email Alerts** Receive free email-alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up at:
http://jimmunol.org/alerts
Glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) is the most common and most deadly primary brain tumor (glioma), accounting for 50% of all intracranial gliomas and 25% of intracranial tumors in adults. Prognosis for GBM patients remains dismal, and age at diagnosis best predicts its clinical outcome despite therapeutic intervention. In this respect, GBM represents the overwhelming majority of human cancers, in which advanced age is the dominant predictor of poor clinical outcome. Although the basis for the age-dependent increase in cancer morbidity and mortality remains poorly understood, T cell immune activity represents an attractive potential contributor, because CD8+ T cell function in particular both contributes to antitumor immunity and is substantially depressed with age.

The property of immunity most sensitive to aging is the production and export of T cells from the thymus. This has been manifested as a decrease in peripheral levels of naive recent thymic emigrant T cells (RTEs) with age, which could influence functional CTL precursor frequency if a proportion of RTEs was tumor specific. We therefore examined RTE levels and tumor Ag specificity in GBM patients and correlated these parameters with clinical outcome and antitumor immune responsiveness. We also directly tested the influence of host T cells on age-dependent glioma survival by implanting glioma cells intracranially into aging wild-type and mutant mice.

We demonstrate in this study that age-dependent GBM outcome is more accurately CD8+ RTE dependent, and that the CD8+ RTE level uniquely reflects the clinical pattern exhibited in human GBM. The data support an overwhelming and direct influence of newly produced T cells on age-dependent tumor outcome.

Materials and Methods

Patients and clinical parameters

Newly diagnosed or recurrent GBM patients (55 years average, 32–78 range) received standard radiation therapy after surgery. Vaccinated patients were steroid free during blood collection and vaccinations, as described (11), and received three vaccines, 2 wk apart, of 10–40 × 10^6 autologous dendritic cells (DC) loaded with 150 μg/ml autologous tumor freeze-thaw lysate, starting ∼15 wk postsurgery. A fourth identical vaccination followed 6 wk later only in phase II trial patients (10 of 17). Serial magnetic resonance imaging scans were performed every 2 mo (66%), every 3 mo (11%), or variably, but at least annually (23%). Tumor recurrence was the time from diagnosis to the first new scan enhancement, if verified by subsequent scans or by histology, or time from diagnosis to death due to tumor progression.

Christopher J. Wheeler, Keith L. Black, Gentao Liu, Han Ying, John S. Yu, Wexuan Zhang, and Paul K. Lee

Received for publication January 14, 2003. Accepted for publication August 26, 2003.

The costs of publication of this article were defrayed in part by the payment of page charges. This article must therefore be hereby marked advertisement in accordance with 18 U.S.C. Section 1734 solely to indicate this fact.

1 This work was supported by a grant from the Joseph Drown Foundation (to C.J.W.).

2 Address correspondence and reprint requests to Dr. Christopher J. Wheeler, Maxine Dunitz Neurosurgical Institute, Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, 8631 West Third Street, Suite 800E, Los Angeles, CA 90048. E-mail address: wheelerc@cshs.org

3 Current address: Chiron Corporation, 4560 Horton Street, Emeryville, CA 94608-2916.

4 Abbreviations used in this paper: GBM, glioblastoma multiforme; DC, dendritic cell; FSC, forward light scatter; pHLA, tumor peptide-loaded HLA tetramer; qPCR, quantitative real-time PCR; RTE, recent thymic emigrant T cell; TREC, TCR excision circle.
Cell isolation and lysis
PBMC were prepared with Ficoll from patients’ blood obtained at the time of surgery and/or from banked leukapheresis. CD4+ and CD8+ T cells were purified from PBMC using MACS bead separation (Miltenyi Biotec, Auburn, CA). A total of 10^6 CD4+ or CD8+ cells/ml was prepared for quantitative real-time PCR (qPCR) by lysis in 100 μg/ml protease K (Boehringer Mannheim, Indianapolis, IN) 1 h, 56°C, with inactivation at 95°C, 10 min.

Flow cytometry
Purified T cells stained on ice with Abs recognizing CD4, CD8, and CD3 were analyzed by three-color flow cytometry (FACScal; BD Biosciences, San Jose, CA) to assess purity. A total of 1 μg PE-labeled tetramers for Her-2/HLA-A2.1, MAGE-1/HLA-A1.1, or gp100/HLA-A2.1 (Beckman Coulter, San Diego, CA), or TRP-2 180/HLA-A2.1, MAGE-1/HLA-A1.1, or gp100/HLA-A2.1 were incubated with monocyte-depleted PBMC (10^6 cells/50 μl) in PBS, 5% FCS, at 25°C, 30 min, followed by 30-min incubation at 25°C with paired combinations of anti-CD8, anti-CD45RO, and/or anti-CD103 mAb (Immunotech, Marcy l’Etoile, France), and 100,000–300,000 flow events were acquired. Tetramer specificity and gating were established by staining epitope-specific T cell clonotypes.

TREC excision circle (TREC) quantification
TRECs were quantified in duplicate or triplicate by qPCR using the 5' nuclelease (TaqMan) method, as previously described (12), and detected on an iCycler system (Bio-Rad, Hercules, CA). qPCR was performed on 5 μl cell lysate (from 50,000 cells) with primers: 5'-CATCCTCTTCACCATCTGCT-3' (forward), 5'-GGACCTGCACGAGGTTTAGG-3' (reverse), and FAM-5'-ACCTCTGGTTTTGAAAGGCCACCT-TAMRA-3' (probe; MegaBases, Chicago, IL). PCR, including 0.5 μl Platinum Taq (Life Technologies, Grand Island, NY), 3.5 mM MgCl2, 0.2 mM dNTPs, 500 μM of each primer, and 150 μM probe, were amplified at 95°C for 5 min, 95°C for 30 s, and 60°C for 1 min for 45 cycles. Control β-actin reactions were performed to ensure nucleic acid content, and negative samples were excluded from further analysis. TRESC values were adjusted for T cell purity.

CTL assays
DC were prepared by incubating loosely adherent PBMC in RPMI + 10% human AB serum, 500 U/ml IL-4, 800 U/ml GM-CSF for 8 days, 37°C, 5% CO2. A total of 2 x 10^5 DC/ml was pulsed with autologous tumor freeze-thaw lysate (150 μg/ml) 18 h and irradiated. Autologous pre- and postvaccination PBMC (1 x 10^6 cells/ml) were stimulated in 10% human AB serum with 1 x 10^5 irradiated lysate-pulsed DC/ml, with IL-2 (300 IU/ml) added on day 2, and 2-h re-stimulation with 150 μg/ml tumor lysate on day 11. RNA was isolated using TRizol (Life Technologies Invitrogen, San Diego, CA), and transcribed using random hexamers. Quantified plasmid DNA standards and cDNAs were amplified using qPCR primers and products (Invitrogen, Alameda, CA), as previously described (13, 14). A = 1.5-fold increase in CD8-normalized IFN-γ production following vaccination indicated a positive response (14). IFN-γ primers: 5'-AGTCTG CATGCTTTTGGTTGT-3' (forward), 5'-GTTCTATTATCCGCTCATCTGAA-3' (reverse), and 5'-FAM-TCTTTGTTATCGCCAAACCA-CA-TAMRA-3' (probe). Reference (CD8) primers: 5'-CCCTGAGAACCTCCATAGT-3' (forward), 5'-GTGCGGTCCTGCTGGA-3' (reverse), and 5'-FAM-TCAGGACACTTGCCCGTTC3-3' (probe). Reactions were amplified in 25 μl, 10 mM dNTP, 400 μM primers, 200 nM TaqMan probe, and 0.5 U Platinum Taq polymerase, at 95°C, 5 min; 95°C, 30 s, 60°C, 30 s for 45 cycles, and detected on an iCycler (Bio-Rad). Patients responsive to TRP-2, Her-2, MAGE-1, or gp100 were identified by post-vaccine increases in IFN-γ production by PBMC to peptide-pulsed T2 cells (1 μM peptide, 2 h, 37°C) using ELISA and/or ELISPOT kits (R&D Systems, Minneapolis, MN), according to manufacturer’s instructions.

Statistical analyses
Statistical analyses included two-tailed Mann-Whitney log rank tests for disease-free and overall survival, binomial distribution probability, two-tailed t tests (p values), and Pearson’s correlation coefficients (r values) calculated with SAS and Excel software. Each cohort patient was matched for analogous sample collection time and magnetic resonance imaging scan frequency, newly diagnosed or recurrent GBM status, similar postradiation therapies (observation, vaccination, or chemotherapy), and either age (age matched; 36-66-year range in each cohort; n = 10/cohort; p = 0.96) or CD8+ TREC values (<100 TREC matched; values). Statistical analyses included two-tailed Mann-Whitney log rank tests for disease-free and overall survival, binomial distribution probability, two-tailed t tests (p values), and Pearson’s correlation coefficients (r values) calculated with SAS and Excel software. Each cohort patient was matched for analogous sample collection time and magnetic resonance imaging scan frequency, newly diagnosed or recurrent GBM status, similar postradiation therapies (observation, vaccination, or chemotherapy), and either age (age matched; 36-66-year range in each cohort; n = 10/cohort; p = 0.96) or CD8+ TREC values (<100 TREC matched; values).

Results
We quantified CD4+ and CD8+ RTEs in 24 newly diagnosed and 18 recurrent GBM patients by TREC analysis, which measures the concentration of nonreplicating TCR DNA excised from the genomes of ~70% of developing human T cells (8). Seventeen of these patients were enrolled onto an approved phase I (recurrent) or phase II (newly diagnosed or recurrent) vaccine trial for high-grade glioma patients, 11 of whom were also tested for antitumor immune activity. This allowed us to examine the role of thymus output in age-dependent GBM outcome and antitumor immunity. As in healthy individuals (8, 15), CD4+ and CD8+ TREC values were different in this regard (Fig. 2). This suggested that CD8+ TREC values might affect GBM outcome in an independent, but age-associated manner. We identified patient cohorts with identical age ranges, but distinct CD8+ TREC values, and those with identical CD8+ TREC values, but different ages, to address the ability of CD8+ TREC values and age to predict GBM outcome independent of each other. Patient age could not be similarly dissociated from CD4+ TREC values. High CD8+ TREC values predicted longer recurrence and overall survival in age-matched cohorts, whereas lower patient age failed to predict either outcome in CD8+ TREC-matched cohorts (Fig. 2). Thus, CD8+ TREC values largely accounted for the prognostic power of age in these patients.

High CD8+ TREC conditions could coincide with tumor-growing processes independent of T cell function or could directly affect GBM outcome by encouraging antitumor T cell responses. In support of the latter, all vaccinated GBM patients with high pre-vaccine CD8+ TREC values (5 of 5) exhibited positive IFN-γ responses after vaccination (p = 0.048 relative to overall responders; Fig. 3a). In contrast, only one vaccinated patient with low CD8+ TREC values (1 of 6) exhibited a positive IFN-γ response after vaccination (p = 0.001 relative to high CD8+ TREC responders; Fig. 3a). Because IFN-γ production in this system could be due to either CD4+ T cell and/or CD8+ T cell reactivity, the direct involvement of TREC-bearing CD8+ T cells in this process was uncertain. Nevertheless, high CD8+ TREC patients were significantly more likely to respond to tumor Ags upon vaccination. This could be because high CD8+ TREC values reflect general host immune

CD8+ RECENT THYMIC EMIGRANTS IN GLIOMA PROGRESSION

Tumor cell implantation in mice
C57BL/6 (Jackson ImmunoResearch Laboratories, West Grove, PA) and CD8β-/- mice (D. Litman, New York University, New York, NY) were housed in a pathogen-free vivarium. Identically sex-matched groups of both middle-aged C57BL/6 (10–15 mo, average = 11.1 mo) and CD8β-/- (12–15 mo, average = 13.8 mo) mice, or aged C57BL/6 (18–24 mo, average = 21 mo) and CD8β-/- (18–21 mo, average = 20.1 mo) mice were used for tumor implantation. Age ranges within older (18–24 mo) C57BL/6 and CD8β-/- groups were statistically identical (p = 0.5, two-tailed t test). Cultured murine GL26 glioma cells were harvested by trypsinization, and 5000 GL26 tumor cells in 2 μl 1% methylcellulose were implanted intracranially using a stereotactic rodent frame, with injection 1 mm posterior and 2.5 mm lateral to the junction of the coronal and sagittal sutures (bregma), at a depth of 2 nm. Thymuses were removed from terminally symptomatic mice, and thymocytes were counted. Survival in days was compared with thymocyte numbers, and Pearson’s correlation coefficients (r values) were determined. Survival differences were assessed by two-tailed Mann-Whitney log rank test.
To begin to distinguish between these possibilities, we examined the relationship between IFN-γ response magnitude and either prevaccine CD8+ TREC levels or vaccine-induced CD8+ RTE proliferation. We reasoned that the degree of vaccine-induced CD8+ RTE proliferation should be more closely related to the magnitude of vaccine-induced IFN-γ responses than are prevaccine CD8+ TREC levels only if CD8+ RTEs directly influence antitumor responses. In this context, CD8+ TREC levels of many patients were substantially diluted, whereas their CD4+ TREC levels were relatively static after vaccination (Fig. 3, b and c). This suggested a specific reaction of TREC-bearing CD8+ RTEs upon vaccination, and allowed tracking of CD8+ TREC dilution after normalization to CD4+ TREC changes as a potential measure of CD8+ RTE proliferation (8, 18). The degree of postvaccine CD8+ TREC dilution correlated very well \( r = 0.96 \) (Fig. 3d), whereas prevaccine CD8+ TREC levels correlated poorly \( r = 0.33 \) (Fig. 3e) with vaccine-induced IFN-γ response magnitude. Thus, IFN-γ production is highly coordinated with vaccine-elicted CD8+ TREC dilution. This could reflect IFN-γ production by CD4+ T cells that supports a proportional CD8+ RTE-dependent proliferative response, or IFN-γ production by proliferating CD8+ RTEs themselves. In either case, this supports the notion that CD8+ TREC dilution reflects a proliferative response by CD8+ RTEs themselves that closely parallels cytokine production upon vaccination. If this notion is valid, a measurable proportion of CD8+ RTEs should be specific for tumor Ags.

To directly examine this, we analyzed binding to soluble HLA multimers loaded with tumor-associated Ags (pHLA\textsuperscript{tum}) in lymphocytes from GBM patients and healthy subjects. Intriguingly, expression of CD103, a marker on a population of CD8+ T cells from GBM patients and healthy subjects, and might be expected to dominate primary immune responses to tumor Ags.

To test this, we identified vaccinated GBM patients exhibiting responses to tumor epitopes (Fig. 5). In patients responding to TRP-2 or to Her-2, small (FSC\textsuperscript{low}) CD103\textsuperscript{+} pHLA\textsuperscript{tum} cells were selectively decreased upon vaccination, further supporting these cells’ correspondence to the TREC-bearing CD8+ RTEs diluted upon vaccination (Fig. 5). Flu-specific small pHLA\textsuperscript{tum} cells were not decreased upon vaccination (data not shown). We reasoned that CD8+ RTEs that were proliferating upon vaccination should simultaneously depart from the small precursor cell pool and expand within the blasts lymphocyte (FSC\textsuperscript{high}) pool of the same patients. Accordingly, FSC\textsuperscript{high} CD103\textsuperscript{+} pHLA\textsuperscript{tum} cells were increased concomitantly with loss of small CD103\textsuperscript{+} pHLA\textsuperscript{tum} RTEs in the same patients (Fig. 5). These large cells were evident before vaccination only in GBM patients (Fig. 5), in which they often represented >1% of the entire PBMC population (data not shown), further suggesting that they represented an expanded tumor-reactive population. Large CD103\textsuperscript{+} pHLA\textsuperscript{tum} cells were phenotypically similar to small CD103\textsuperscript{+} pHLA\textsuperscript{tum} cells (i.e., CD3+ CD8+), except that most of them expressed the effector/memory cell marker, CD5RO (Fig. 6). The only other substantial
population of CD103+/CD45RO+ T cells resides predominantly within intestinal mucosa (20, 21). Because the CD103+ pHLA^lum+ large cell population expanded after peripheral rather than mucosal vaccination, it is likely that it originates from peripheral CD103+ precursors such as CD8+ RTEs. In support of this, a small population of CD45RO+ cells was consistently observed within the CD103+ pHLA^lum+ large cell pool after vaccination (Fig. 6). This feature was not consistently observed before vaccination (data not shown), and indicates that some of the cells that expanded upon vaccination possess a CD8+ RTE phenotype. This in turn suggests that CD103+ pHLA^lum+ large cells originate from peripheral CD45R0-/CD8+ RTEs, and that CD8+ RTEs preferentially respond to tumor Ags in vivo.

To determine whether CD8+ RTE antitumor responses contributed to the association between CD8+ TREC and GBM outcome, we separated the 11 vaccinated GBM patients into two groups based on age above or below the median. The same 11 patients were separated into similar paired groups, based on medians of vaccine-induced IFN-γ response magnitude, prevaccine CD4+ or CD8+ TREC, degree of postvaccine CD8+ TREC dilution, or number of CD8+ TREC diluted after vaccination. When recurrence and survival times were compared within each group pair, only those distinguished by numbers of CD8+ TREC lost after vaccination exhibited significantly different recurrence-free and overall survival (Fig. 7). Thus, the most accurate correlate of clinical outcome in these patients was the number of CD8+ RTEs

---

**FIGURE 2.** CD8+ TRECs account for age-dependent GBM outcome. The entire population of patients (age, sex, CD4 TREC, and CD8 TREC plots) or patient cohorts (age-matched and CD8 TREC-matched plots) was separated into groups based on the parameters indicated at right and Kaplan-Meier analysis performed. Patients were separated for analyses by: age above (broken lines) or below (filled lines) the median of the entire population (first row), and age above (filled lines) or below (broken lines) the median of CD8 TREC-matched cohorts (sixth row); TREC above (filled lines) or below (broken lines) the median of the entire population (third and fourth rows) or cohorts (fifth row); female (filled lines) or male (broken lines) in the entire population (second row). □, Reflect censored clinical outcome data. Females exhibited a tendency (nonsignificant) toward slower GBM recurrence (second row). Each cohort patient was matched for either age (36- to 66-year range in each cohort; n = 10/cohort; p = 0.96) or CD8+ TREC (1.5–4309.5 and 0.6–5530.4 ranges in old and young cohorts, respectively; n = 11/cohort; p = 0.86), to a counterpart with distinct CD8+ TRECs (p < 0.05) or age (p < 0.008), respectively. Two-tailed Mann-Whitney log rank tests for disease-free and overall survival for populations segregated by median values of the indicated parameters (age, sex, etc.) were calculated with SAS software.

**FIGURE 3.** CD8+ TRECs are associated with in vitro responses to tumor Ags and are specifically modulated in vivo, upon vaccination. a, High and low CD8+ TREC levels correlated with increased incidence of IFN-γ production after vaccination in 11 recurrent GBM (grade IV glioma; ○) patients (p < 0.05). Findings were identical with the addition of data from three vaccinated anaplastic astrocytoma (grade III glioma; △) patients. IFN-γ response = postvaccine IFN-γ transcripts normalized to CD8 transcripts in the presence of Ag – no Ag control/prevaccine IFN-γ transcripts normalized to CD8 transcripts in the presence of Ag – no Ag control. Binomial distribution probability was determined for IFN-γ production by patients with high and low CD8+ TREC levels. b, Prevaccine CD8+ TRECs (○) from vaccinated GBM patients correlated strongly with recurrence (r = 0.85), and were decreased in some patients upon vaccination (●). c, Prevaccine CD4+ TRECs (○) from the same recurrent GBM patients correlated strongly with recurrence (r = 0.73; p < 0.01), but were not substantially decreased upon vaccination (●). d, The degree of specific CD8+ TREC dilution upon vaccination (prevaccine CD8+ TREC/post-vaccine CD8+ TREC) was normalized to changes in CD4+ TREC (divided by prevaccine CD4+ TRECs/postvaccine CD4+ TRECs from the same patient) and Pearson’s correlations determined for the indicated parameters. Specific CD8+ TREC dilution upon vaccination correlated with IFN-γ response (r = 0.96; p < 0.001). Correlations were minimally affected (r = 0.95; p < 0.001) by the addition of anaplastic astrocytoma data (△). e, Pearson’s correlations were determined for the indicated parameters. Prevaccine CD8+ TREC levels correlated poorly with IFN-γ response (r = 0.35; p > 0.05). Correlations were minimally affected (r = 0.38; p > 0.05) by the addition of anaplastic astrocytoma data (△). Data were derived from all vaccinated GBM or anaplastic astrocytoma patients for whom CTL and TREC results were available, except for the exclusion of a single GBM patient who had been administered independent therapeutic vaccinations before revaccination and analysis.
proliferating over a relatively short time span. Because this proliferation was tightly associated with antitumor responses after vaccination (Fig. 3d), this suggests that the reason prevaccine CD8⁺ TREC predict GBM outcome is that they reflect the potential for ongoing antitumor responses mediated directly by CD8⁺ RTEs. In this context, segregating patients by any criteria (median or higher) for IFN-γ responsiveness itself failed to significantly correlate with recurrence-free or overall survival. This additionally suggests that the clinical manifestations of antitumor activity by CD8⁺ RTEs may be more directly related to their proliferation than to any associated IFN-γ production.

The above data are consistent with a direct influence of thymus CD8⁺ T cell production on age-dependent GBM outcome. We sought to unequivocally verify this in a rodent model of intracranial glioma. Based on the sufficiency of Ag-pulsed professional APC administration to elicit clinically beneficial antitumor immunity in rodent glioma models (22–24), it was considered unlikely that CD8⁺ RTEs limited such immunity in wild-type mice. This led to the prediction that age-dependent glioma outcome similar to that observed in GBM patients would not be evident in mice unless CD8⁺ RTE production was specifically diminished. CD8⁺/H9253/H11002/H11002 mice exhibit a partial reduction in thymic production of CD8⁺ T cells, with retention of peripheral CD8⁺ T cell activity levels comparable to wild-type mice (25, 26). This allowed us to test whether age-dependent glioma survival was directly influenced by CD8⁺ T cells by implanting GL26 glioma cells (27) intracranially into middle-aged and aged (to optimally model human GBM patients) wild-type and CD8⁺/H9253/H11002/H11002 mice. Survival was prolonged in aged relative to young (data not shown) or middle-aged GL26-bearing wild-type mice (Fig. 8), reflecting a general trend in aged murine GBM patients.
tumor hosts (28). Thymocyte numbers, which are directly proportional to peripheral CD8+ RTE/TREC levels in mice (10), also failed to correlate with host survival after GL26 implantation in wild-type hosts (Fig. 8). Such correlation is an expected consequence of CD8+ RTE levels influencing tumor host survival. In contrast, significantly shorter survival was observed in aged CD8β−/− mice as well as aged wild-type GL26 hosts (Fig. 8). CD8β−/− mice also exhibited a strong correlation between thymocyte numbers and survival after GL26 implantation (Fig. 8). This suggests that diminished thymic CD8+ T cell production accounts for increased mortality in aged tumor hosts.

**Discussion**

We show that a T cell parameter predicts clinical outcome in an advanced, nonimmunogenic human tumor better than the strongest established prognostic factor (age). Specifically, CD8+ TREC levels accounted for age-dependent GBM recurrence and survival rates. CD8+ TREC dilution following vaccination was directly proportional to the magnitude of antiglioma lysate responses, suggesting that CD8+ RTEs might account for a substantial proportion of tumor-reactive T cells, a notion supported by the specific enrichment of CD8+ RTEs within an experimental rat glioma (29). Further supporting this notion, CD8+ RTEs comprised the majority of precursor T cells capable of recognizing any of at least four distinct common tumor Ags expressed by gliomas, and dominantly contributed to responses directed toward these Ags. Moreover, the epitopes recognized by CD8+ RTEs can be functionally present on distinct tumors such as melanoma and carcinoma (30–33). This reveals the possibility that CD8+ RTEs may be broadly relevant to cancer immunity. In this context, changes in CD8+ RTE numbers might help explain differences in the outcome of human cancer based on variables that may influence CD8+ RTE production by the thymus, including age, gender, treatment modalities, and endogenous or exogenous hormones.

Numbers of CD8+ RTEs proliferating to tumor Ags in vivo, as estimated by tracking CD8+ TREC dilution, significantly predicted clinical outcome in vaccinated GBM patients, whereas other immunological parameters (enhanced IFN-γ production) did not. In this context, it is interesting that IFN-γ response magnitudes corresponded well with CD8+ TREC dilution factors, but still failed to predict GBM outcome. This implies that IFN-γ response magnitude may accurately reflect proportions, but not numbers of responding CD8+ RTEs, and that the latter is most clinically relevant. In addition, clinically effective antitumor activity by these cells is most likely mediated by a cellular property that is not dependent. Intrinsic CD8+ RTE production elicits the pattern of age-dependent outcome observed in GBM patients. Top row, Intracranial tumor cell implantation into middle-aged (10–15 mo; ○) and aged (18–24 mo; ▲) wild-type C57BL/6 or CD8β−/− mice revealed significantly decreased survival in aged CD8β−/− relative to both middle-aged CD8β−/− mice (p < 0.02) and aged wild-type C57BL/6 mice (p < 0.000001; Mantel-Cox log rank), with identical survival of middle-aged wild-type and CD8β−/− mice (p = 0.3; Mantel-Cox log rank). Bottom row, Thymocyte numbers were determined in combined middle-aged and aged (○) wild-type C57BL/6 or CD8β−/− mice upon acquisition of terminal glioma symptoms, and correlated (Pearson’s correlations) with host survival in days. Strong correlation similar to that observed between CD8+ RTEs and GBM patient clinical outcome (r ≥ 0.86; p < 0.001 in both cases) was observed exclusively in CD8β−/− mice.

![FIGURE 7. Numbers of responding CD8+ RTEs consistently predict GBM clinical outcome. Recurrent vaccinated GBM patients (11) were separated into high and low groups according to median values of the indicated parameters (above), and tested for significant differences in recurrence and survival times by two-sided \( t \) test. ○ Reflected censored outcome data (two surviving patients; all had recurred). CD8 TREC, Indicates pre-vaccine CD8+ TREC levels. CD8 TREC dilution amt., Indicates pre-vaccine CD8+ TREC/postvaccine CD8+ TREC dilutions divided by pre-vaccine CD4+ TREC/postvaccine CD4+ TREC. IFN-γ response, Indicates post-vaccine IFN-γ with Ag – no Ag control/prevaccine IFN-γ with Ag – no Ag control. No. diluted CD8 TREC, Indicates prevaccine – postvaccine CD8+ TREC levels (identical groupings were obtained by multiplying CD8 TREC dilution amt. by CD8 TREC). No. diluted CD8 TREC also correlated strongly (Pearson’s correlation) with recurrence and survival times (r = 0.7 and 0.87, respectively; both p < 0.05), as did CD8 TREC (r = 0.8 and 0.78, respectively; both p < 0.05). CD8 TREC dilution amt. and IFN-γ response correlated well with survival only (r = 0.7 and 0.6, respectively; both p < 0.05). All other correlations were relatively weak (r < 0.39; p > 0.05).](http://www.jimmunol.org/)

![FIGURE 8. Decreased CD8+ T cell production elicits the pattern of age-dependent outcome observed in GBM patients. Top row, Intracranial tumor cell implantation into middle-aged (10–15 mo; ○) and aged (18–24 mo; ▲) wild-type C57BL/6 or CD8β−/− mice revealed significantly decreased survival in aged CD8β−/− relative to both middle-aged CD8β−/− mice (p < 0.02) and aged wild-type C57BL/6 mice (p < 0.000001; Mantel-Cox log rank), with identical survival of middle-aged wild-type and CD8β−/− mice (p = 0.3; Mantel-Cox log rank). Bottom row, Thymocyte numbers were determined in combined middle-aged and aged (○) wild-type C57BL/6 or CD8β−/− mice upon acquisition of terminal glioma symptoms, and correlated (Pearson’s correlations) with host survival in days. Strong correlation similar to that observed between CD8+ RTEs and GBM patient clinical outcome (r ≥ 0.86; p < 0.001 in both cases) was observed exclusively in CD8β−/− mice.](http://www.jimmunol.org/)
host survival and its strong correlation with thymus cellular product levels are influenced in a concerted manner by CD8+ T cell production and/or function. Taken together, this strongly suggests that an endogenous host immune parameter, namely thymus product of CD8+ T cells, is sufficient to account for age-dependent glioma mortality in mice and in human GBM patients. In wild-type mice, however, the influence of this process is masked, suggesting that at least aged patients and wild-type mice differ with respect to processes critically limiting beneficial antitumor immunity. Because Ag availability and professional APC function appear to be the primary limitations to beneficial antitumor immunity in rodent tumor models (23, 24), this may help explain why APC-based cancer vaccines are at best of limited efficacy in many cancer patients (11).

Acknowledgments

We gratefully acknowledge the patients and their families who contributed samples for the study; Dr. D. Douek (National Institutes of Health) for invaluable technical guidance and for reviewing the manuscript; D. Littman (New York University) for CD8+/- mice; Patricia Lin for flow cytometer operation; and L. Blaszkiewicz, A. Donner, D. Nacis, Dr. M. Riedinger, K. Sydes, and J. Garcia for clinical data management.

References