

Destructive Arthritis in the Absence of Both Fc γ RI and Fc γ RIII¹

Peter Boross,* Peter L. van Lent,[†] Javier Martin-Ramirez,* Jos van der Kaa,*
Melissa H. C. M. Mulder,* Jill W. C. Claassens,* Wim B. van den Berg,[†]
Victoria L. Arandhara,* and J. Sjef Verbeek^{2*}

Fc receptors for IgG (Fc γ R) have been implicated in the development of arthritis. However, the precise contribution of the individual Fc γ R to joint pathology is unclear. In this study, the role of the different Fc γ R was assessed both in an active and in a passive mouse model of arthritis by analyzing disease development in double and triple knockout (KO) offspring from crosses of Fc γ RI KO, Fc γ RIII KO, Fc γ RI/III double KO, or FcR γ -chain KO with the Fc γ RII KO on C57BL6 background, which is susceptible for collagen-induced arthritis (CIA). In the active CIA model, onset was significantly delayed in the absence of Fc γ RIII, whereas incidence and maximum severity were significantly decreased in Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO but not in Fc γ RII/III double KO and Fc γ RI/II double KO mice as compared with Fc γ RII KO animals. Remarkably, fully destructive CIA developed in Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO mice. In contrast, FcR γ /Fc γ RII double KO mice were resistant to CIA. These findings were confirmed with the passive KRN serum-induced arthritis model. These results indicate that all activating Fc γ R play a role in the development of arthritis, mainly in the downstream effector phase. Fc γ RIII is critically required for early arthritis onset, and Fc γ RI can substantially contribute to arthritis pathology. Importantly, Fc γ RI and Fc γ RIII were together dispensable for the development of destructive arthritis but the FcR γ -chain was not, suggesting a role for another FcR γ -chain associated receptor, most likely Fc γ RIV. In addition, Fc γ RII plays a negative regulatory role in both the central and effector phase of arthritis. *The Journal of Immunology*, 2008, 180: 5083–5091.

It has been well established that Abs are associated with rheumatoid arthritis (RA)³ (1). However, their direct involvement in disease initiation and progression remains a matter of debate. The promising results with anti-CD20 therapy, targeting Ab-producing B cells in RA, suggest a direct role for this cell type in arthritis (2). The important role of B cells and pathogenic Abs has been confirmed in a large variety of arthritis models in mice including collagen-induced arthritis (CIA) and the K/BxN serum-induced arthritis model (3–5).

CIA is the most widely used animal model of arthritis because it resembles the key features of human RA. Disease is induced by immunization with bovine type II collagen (bCII) in susceptible mouse strains (6). This results in the emergence of bCII-specific T cells and high titers of specific autoantibodies. K/BxN mice, a TCR transgenic mouse crossed onto the non-obese diabetic (NOD) background, develop spontaneous arthritis due to the presence of

high titers of autoantibodies directed against glucose-6-phosphate isomerase (GPI) (7, 8). In both models, arthritis can be transferred by sera from sick animals or by purified anti-bCII Abs (anti-bCII moAb-induced arthritis) or anti-GPI Abs, indicating a crucial role for pathogenic immune complexes (IC) in arthritis (4, 9).

IgG-IC crosslinks Fc γ R, leukocyte receptors for IgG, resulting in the initiation of cellular activation pathways (10). Studies of RA and arthritis in animal models demonstrate that Fc γ R are crucial players in the pathogenesis of arthritis (11–16). It has been shown that activation of infiltrating or resident cells in the joint leads to severe cartilage destruction, such as matrix metalloproteinase-induced damage or chondrocyte death (17). Activating Fc γ R have been implicated in this process in the Ag-induced arthritis (AIA) model (13, 18).

Four types of Fc γ R have been identified in the mouse. Fc γ RI, Fc γ RIII, and Fc γ RIV are multi-subunit receptors that mediate activation signals via the common γ -chain when crosslinked by ICs (19, 20). Fc γ RII is a single-chain receptor, which inhibits cell activation upon co-engagement with activating Fc γ R by ICs (21). The balance of activating and inhibiting signals determine the outcome of Fc γ R signaling in multiple cell types. Dysregulation of this complex system may lead to the emergence of autoimmunity (22).

FcR γ -chain KO mice that lack the expression of all activating Fc γ R, and C5 KO mice, are substantially protected from CIA and K/BxN serum-induced arthritis (11, 12), indicating that complement and the activating Fc γ R are indispensable in both models. The crucial role of the activating Fc γ R has been confirmed with proteoglycan (PG)-induced arthritis and with AIA (23, 24). Fc γ RIII KO mice show greatly diminished disease activity in CIA on DBA/1 background and in the passive K/BxN serum- and anti-bCII moAb-induced arthritis on mixed 129/C57BL6 background

*Department of Human Genetics, Leiden University Medical Center, Leiden; and [†]Department of Rheumatology, University Medical Center St. Radboud, Nijmegen, The Netherlands

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² Address correspondence and reprint requests to Dr. J. Sjef Verbeek, Department of Human Genetics, Leiden University Medical Center, Albinusdreef 2, Postzone S4-P, 2333 ZA Leiden, The Netherlands. E-mail address: j.s.verbeek@lumc.nl

³ Abbreviations used in this paper: RA, rheumatoid arthritis; CIA, collagen-induced arthritis; bCII, bovine type II collagen; KO, knockout; GPI, glucose-6-phosphate isomerase; IC, immune complex; AIA, Ag-induced arthritis; PG, proteoglycan; K/BxN, KRN.

(11, 25, 26), whereas in AIA, the role of Fc γ RI and Fc γ RIII were found to be redundant (27).

Fc γ RII KO mice have an impaired control over Ab responses and exhibit a hyper responsive phenotype in several *in vivo* models of inflammation (21). Fc γ RII KO DBA/1 mice develop more severe CIA than wild-type littermates (12). Moreover, in contrast to wild-type C57BL6 mice, Fc γ RII KO mice on C57BL6 background are susceptible for the induction of CIA, indicating a role for Fc γ RII in controlling tolerance (28). Furthermore, Fc γ RIII KO mice show similar (11) or enhanced disease activity compared with wild-type controls (29) in the K/BxN serum-induced arthritis model.

In the light of observations in other IC-mediated disease models, such as hemolytic anemia (30, 31), anaphylaxis, bacterial infections, AIA (31), and in anti-tumor immunotherapy (32, 33), it is surprising that so far no role for Fc γ RI could be defined in most arthritis models e.g., CIA and the K/BxN serum-induced arthritis. In addition, a prominent role has been described for the recently identified receptor for IgG, Fc γ RIV in a variety of Ab-mediated immune responses, such as experimental immune thrombocytopenia (20), anti-tumor responses (33), and nephrotoxic nephritis (34) but so far not in arthritis. Experiments performed with single Fc γ R KO mice may not be suitable to define the highly redundant role of the individual Fc γ R in arthritis. By establishing C57BL6 strains that in addition to Fc γ RIII lack either Fc γ RI or Fc γ RIII or both, the role of individual Fc γ R in CIA could be assessed. Our results show for the first time that in addition to Fc γ RIII, Fc γ RI can contribute to the pathology of CIA. Interestingly, destructive arthritis developed even in the absence of both Fc γ RI and Fc γ RIII but not in the absence of the Fc γ -chain, suggesting a role for another γ -chain associated receptor, most likely Fc γ RIV, in the downstream effector phase of CIA. This could be confirmed in the passive K/BxN serum-induced arthritis model with the same set of KO mice. Furthermore, the results obtained from two different models of arthritis show that Fc γ RIII plays a regulatory role in both the central and the downstream effector phase of arthritis.

Materials and Methods

Mice

The generation of mice deficient for Fc γ RI (31) and Fc γ RIII (35) has been described previously. Fc γ RIII KO (21) and Fc γ -chain KO (19) mice were kindly provided by Drs. T. Takai (Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan) and T. Saito (RIKEN Research Center for Allergy and Immunology, Yokohama, Japan), respectively. By intercrossing the three parental single KO strains, a Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO strain was generated, which was subsequently backcrossed six generations onto C57BL6 background. From the offspring of the intercrosses of the $n = 6$ heterozygous triple KO mice, the different homozygous single, double, and triple KO mice were selected. Their genotypes were routinely checked by PCR and/or FACS analysis. The KRN TCR transgenic strain was a generous gift of Drs. D. Mathis and C. Benoist (Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA) and was maintained on C57BL6 background. B10g7 mice were purchased from Taconic, NY. All mice were backcrossed, bred, and maintained in the SPF unit, and experiments were conducted at the experimental unit of the laboratory animal facility of the Leiden University Medical Center. The health status of the animals in both units was monitored over time according to Federation of European Laboratory Animal Science Associations rules, and the animals were found to be pathogen-free according to Federation of European Laboratory Animal Science Associations criteria. All experimental protocols were approved by the local ethical committee.

Induction and clinical evaluation of CIA

bCII (MD Biosciences) was dissolved in 0.1 M acetic acid overnight at 4°C at a concentration of 2 mg/ml. Age-matched male mice were immunized at the tail base with 100 μ g bCII emulsified in CFA (Difco) and boosted on day 28 with 100 μ g bCII in IFA at the same location. Starting from day 14, mice were inspected and scored in a blinded manner three times a week. Disease progress was evaluated visually using an extended scoring proto-

col (36). In brief, each limb was assigned a score of 0–15 on the basis of the number of joints affected, so that a mouse could reach a total score of 60. An arthritic toe and knuckle was scored as 1, with a maximum of 10 per paw. An arthritic ankle or mid paw was given a score of 5. Mice with two legs reaching the maximal score were euthanized and their end score was carried forward in the analysis.

Passive arthritis induction by K/BxN-serum transfer

K/BxN-serum pools were prepared from arthritic mice generated from the cross between the KRN and B10g7 mice (carrying the NOD-derived g⁷ MHC allele) at the age of 6 wk. Arthritis was induced in the recipient strain by *i.p.* injection (10 μ l serum/g body weight) at days 0 and 2. A clinical score was assigned to each mouse as described above. Ankle thickness was measured by a caliper and compared with the baseline value (5).

Anti-bCII Ab titers

Blood was collected from mice by retro-orbital bleeding on the indicated days (day 42 or 60) after immunization, and Ab titers were determined by ELISA. Immuno-Maxisorp plates were coated with 2 μ g/ml bCII (Chondrex; MD Biosciences) overnight at 4°C. After washing with PBS-0.05% Tween20, the plates were blocked with PBS/10% milk for 2 h at 4°C. The plates were incubated overnight at 4°C with serially diluted mouse serum. After washing, the plates were subsequently treated with one of the following detection Abs: biotin-conjugated anti-mouse IgG2b (developed with SA-HRP conjugate), HRP-conjugated anti-mouse IgG1, HRP-conjugated anti-mouse IgG2a (BD Biosciences), or HRP-conjugated anti-mouse IgG (Southern Biotechnology Associates). Then, 3,3',5,5'-tetramethylbenzidine (Sigma-Aldrich) was used as substrate and reaction was detected at 405 nm. bCII-specific Ab titers were compared with a reference of pooled sera of arthritic mice and assigned an arbitrary value.

Anti-GPI ELISA

Recombinant mouse GPI-GST and KRNxNOD serum were a kind gift of Christophe Benoist (Harvard Medical School, Boston, MA). Immuno-maxisorp plates were coated with GPI-GST (5 μ g/ml) in PBS at 4°C overnight. Plates were blocked with PBS-1% BSA and washed with PBS before incubation with serially diluted serum samples in PBS at room temperature for 1 h. After washing with PBS-1% BSA, titers of isotype-specific anti-GPI were revealed using the detection Abs and substrate as for the anti-bCII ELISA.

Histology and x-ray analysis of arthritic knee joint

Total knee joints were dissected and fixed in 5% phosphate buffered formalin, decalcified in 5% buffered formic acid, dehydrated, and embedded in paraffin. Tissue sections spacing 140 μ m representing the whole knee joints were mounted on gelatin coated slides. H&E staining was performed to study the inflammatory cells. To study PG depletion from the cartilage matrix, sections were stained with safranin-O and subsequently counterstained with Fast Green. Three adjacent sections showing all cartilage layers (patella/femur and tibia) were used for scoring. Severity of joint inflammation was determined using an arbitrary score (0–3) based on the influx of inflammatory cells (inflammatory cell mass) in the synovium and joint cavity.

Depletion of PG as detected by the loss of red safranin-O staining from various cartilage layers (patella and femur) was determined using an arbitrary scale of 0–3. Normal cartilage was scored 0, whereas a cartilage fully depleted of PGs was scored as 3. Erosion was defined as ruffling of the cartilage surface expressed as percentage of impaired cartilage surface of the total cartilage surface. All variables were scored by an experienced investigator.

At the end of the experiments mice were anesthetized and x-ray images were taken.

Statistics

Statistical differences between the KO strains for onset of arthritis and maximum severity were assessed by Student's *t* test. Differences in histological parameters and in serum levels of Abs were assessed with Mann-Whitney *U* test. Arthritis incidence was compared using the Fisher's exact test. A value of $p < 0.05$ was considered significant.

Results

Clinical course of CIA in combined Fc γ R KO mice

Mice deficient for different combinations of Fc γ R, established on C57BL6 background, and immunized against bCII were observed

Table I. Collagen-induced arthritis course in four separate experiments^a

	<i>n</i>	Day of Onset Mean ± SEM	Incidence	Max Severity Score Mean ± SD
Experiment 1				
DBA/1	8	34.4 ± 2.7	7/8 (87.5%)	27.3 ± 9.9
FcγRII KO	6	39.4 ± 5.1	5/6 (83.3%)	31.4 ± 20.8
Experiment 2				
FcγRII KO	12	40.4 ± 9.7	7/12 (58.33%)	42.2 ± 19.7
FcγRI/II KO	20	35.6 ± 6.7	13/20 (65%)	41.7 ± 19.1
FcγRII/III KO	23	75.4 ± 7.3*	13/23 (56.52%)	28.9 ± 20.6
FcγRI/II/III KO	17	68.9 ± 12.6*	6/17 (35.29%)	27.5 ± 25.4
Experiment 3				
FcγRI/II KO	12	29.6 ± 6.9	11/12 (91.6%)	35.9 ± 19.9
FcγRII/III KO	15	53.6 ± 8.9*	15/15 (100%)	40.5 ± 17.5
FcγRI/II/III KO	20	60.3 ± 13.2*	8/20 (40%)	15.6 ± 11.5
C57BL/6	10	72.0 ± 1*	3/10 (30%)	7.6 ± 6.3
Experiment 4				
C57BL/6	9	40	1/9 (11.1%)	3
FcγRII KO	23	28.3 ± 2.7	20/23 (86.9%)	42.2 ± 5.1
FcRγ/FcγRII KO	41	N.A.	0/41 (0%)	N.A.

^a Mice were immunized with bCII in CFA as described in *Materials and Methods* and monitored for the development of arthritis. Four independent experiments were performed, and mice were inspected blindly three times a week. Incidence stands for the number of mice affected per total number of mice in a group. Arthritic indices only represent sick mice. Asterisk indicates significant differences (*, *p* < 0.05) as compared with FcγRI/II double KO groups (Student's *t* test) N.A.: Not applicable.

for the development of arthritis for at least 125 days. An overview of the four separate experiments (experiments 1–4) using FcγR KO mice is presented in Table I. In Experiment 1, FcγRII KO mice were susceptible to CIA and exhibited a disease course similar to DBA/1 mice confirming published results (Table I, data not shown) (28). Fig. 1 shows that the relative disease incidence and severity between KO strains were similar in experiments 2 and 3. In experiment 3, FcγRII/III double KO mice developed arthritis more rapidly compared with experiment 2, which probably reflects variation between the two immunizations.

FcγRII KO mice developed severe arthritis with an early onset and with a cumulative incidence (experiments 1 and 2) of 66.6% (12/18), similar to previous studies (28). Incidence and severity in FcγRI/II double KO mice were similar to that in FcγRII KO mice (Table I; Fig. 1, A–D). We observed attenuated disease progression in FcγRII/III double KO mice. However, at the end point, incidence in both experiments 2 and 3 and severity in experiment 3 were comparable to the incidence and severity of FcγRII KO and FcγRI/II double KO mice (Table I, Fig. 1, A–D). FcγRI/II/III triple KO mice developed arthritis with a significantly lower cumulative

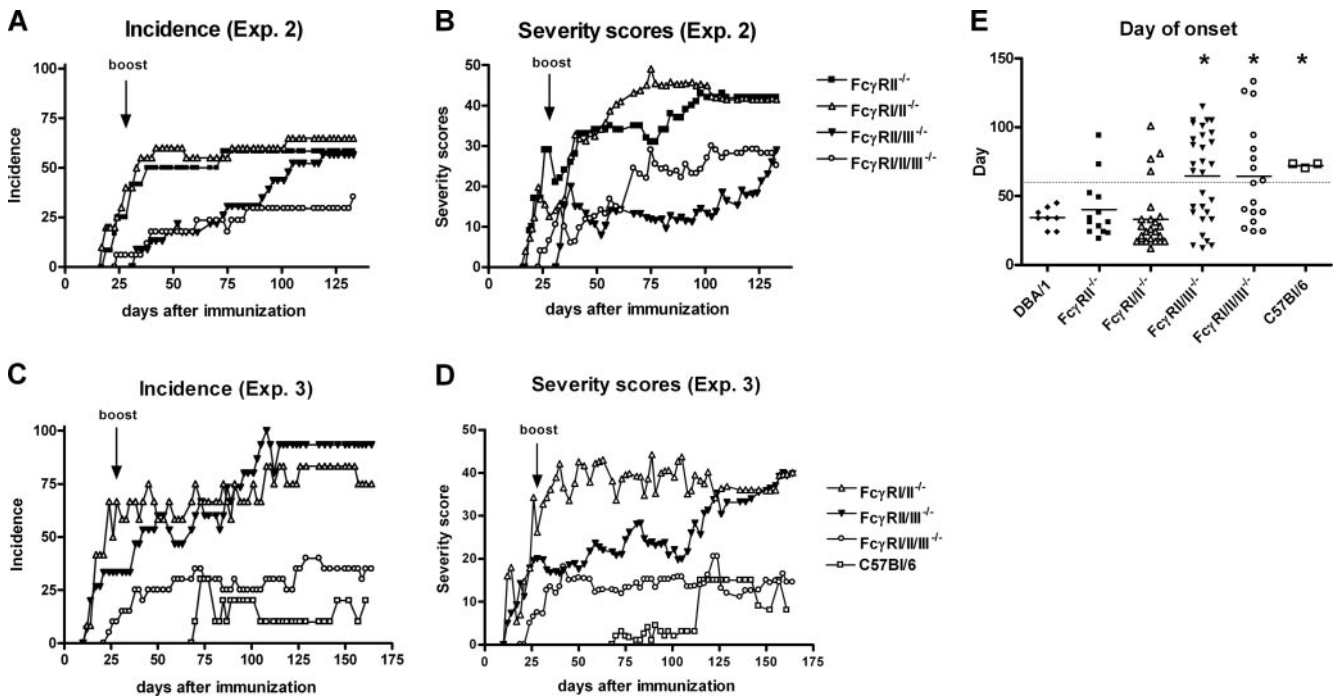


FIGURE 1. Development of CIA in FcγR KO mice. The incidence of arthritis (A and C) is the percentage of all mice showing arthritic symptoms at a given time point after immunization with bCII in CFA. Arthritis index (B and D) indicates the mean severity score from all the sick mice in a group on a given day. Results from two separate experiments (2 and 3) are shown; group sizes are given in Table I. E, Disease onset of affected mice from CIA experiments 1–3 is plotted and their mean is given. Asterisks indicate significant difference (*, *p* < 0.05) as compared with FcγRII KO and FcγRI/II double KO groups (Student's *t* test).

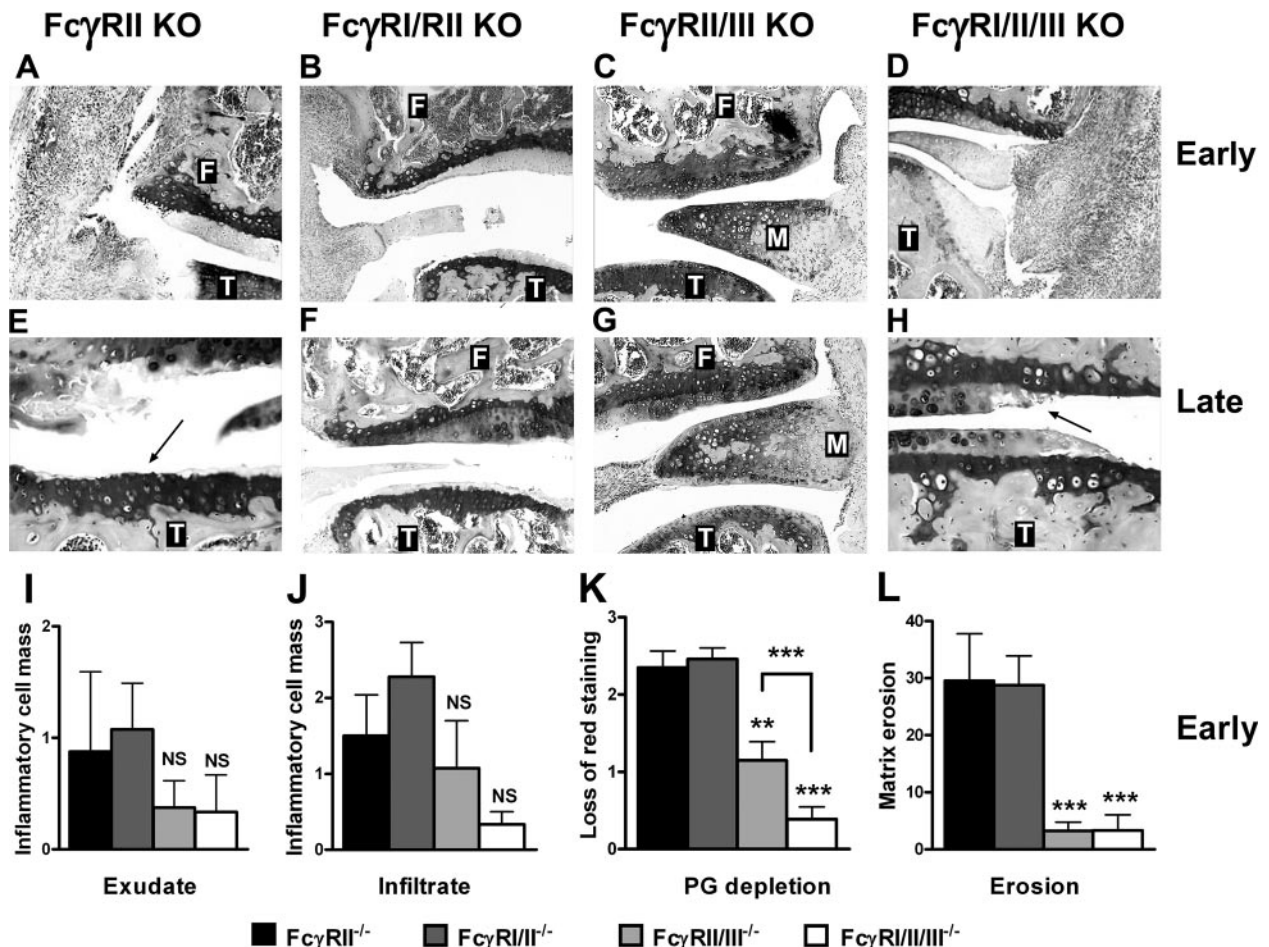


FIGURE 2. Histology of CIA in Fc γ R KO mice. Representative Safranin *O*-stained knee sections from sick Fc γ R KO mice are shown (A–H). Mice suffering from arthritis for <2 wk (A–D; early) or from 60 to 100 days (E–H; late). Quantification of histological parameters (I–L) in arthritic knee joints in mice with <2 wk of arthritis is shown. Sections were scored for features of inflammation and cartilage destruction using an arbitrary scale (see *Materials and Methods*). Cellular mass in the joint cavity (exudate (I)), and in the synovial layer (infiltrate (J)) was graded using an arbitrary scale of 0–3 (0 = no cells, 1 = few cells, 2 = moderate, and 3 = maximal within the experiment). Cartilage destruction was measured as PG depletion (K) and cartilage erosion (L). Joint structures are labeled as follows: femur (F), tibia (T), and the meniscus (M). (*, $p < 0.05$, **, $p < 0.01$, ***, $p < 0.001$, NS: non significant by Mann-Whitney *U* test) Magnification of original photographs: $\times 100$ (A–D, F, and G) or $\times 400$ (E and H). The arrows indicate damage of cartilage surface.

incidence (37.8%, 14/37), compared with Fc γ RI/II double KO (24/32, 75%) and Fc γ RII/III double KO mice (28/38, 73.7%) ($p < 0.05$, Fisher's exact test). In experiment 2 and 3, maximum severity was also significantly lower in Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO mice compared with the other three Fc γ R KO strains (Table I; $p < 0.05$, Student's *t* test). Arthritis in Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO mice typically affected fewer joints but was clinically similar to the arthritis in the other strains.

The majority of the arthritic Fc γ RII KO and Fc γ RI/II double KO mice (83.7% and 84%, respectively) developed arthritis with an early onset (defined as < day 60), similar to DBA/1 mice (Fig. 1E). Combined data from experiments 1–3 showed significantly delayed onset of arthritis in Fc γ RII/III double KO and Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO mice compared with Fc γ RII KO or Fc γ RI/II double KO mice ($p < 0.05$, Student's *t* test). Approximately half of the



FIGURE 3. Bone destruction in Fc γ R KO mice in CIA. Representative x-ray images from Fc γ R KO mice with CIA between 11 and 13 wk (B–E). Clear signs of bone destruction can be observed in all genotypes, including the Fc γ R I/II/III triple KO (E), compared with intact bone surface in healthy animals (A).

Fc γ RII/III double KO and Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO mice (56.6% and 47%, respectively) developed arthritis with late onset (>day 60) (Fig. 1E). In addition, FcR γ /Fc γ RII double KO mice, lacking functional expression of all known Fc γ R, were fully resistant to CIA (Table I, data not shown).

A background of spontaneously developing cartilage destruction was observed in some aged (>8 mo) nonimmunized Fc γ RII KO mice but not in aged C57BL/6 mice (data not shown). Moreover, some C57BL/6 mice immunized with bCII were scored positive for the development of arthritis at later stage. However, in all cases the effects were very mild. Therefore, we concluded that in the chosen experimental conditions also at late time points (>60 days) development of severe arthritis was dependent on the absence of Fc γ RII and immunization with bCII.

Taken together, the incidence and maximum severity in CIA were significantly decreased in Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO mice as compared with Fc γ RII KO, Fc γ RI/II, and Fc γ RII/III double KO animals. In addition, the onset of arthritis was significantly delayed in the absence of Fc γ RIII. Moreover, we have found that FcR γ -chain is indispensable for the development of CIA in agreement with previous results (12).

Histological analysis of CIA in Fc γ R KO mice

The characteristic histological features of arthritis, representing different stages of disease progression, such as cell infiltrate (neutrophils, macrophages, and lymphocytes), exudate, proliferation of the synovium, PG depletion, erosion of cartilage, and bone destruction were observed in all arthritic mice analyzed independent from their genotype. Arthritis developed in mice deficient for multiple Fc γ R (Fc γ RI/II, Fc γ RII/III, and Fc γ RI/II/III), and carried all the histological hallmarks of CIA as observed in Fc γ RII KO mice. Representative images of knee sections from diseased animals are shown in Fig. 2, A–H.

Knee joints that were affected for the same period of time (less than 2 wk) were selected for in depth analysis from three to four arthritic mice of each Fc γ R KO genotype. Sections from each knee were scored for the degree of PG depletion and cartilage erosion, reflecting early and advanced cartilage damage, respectively.

Exudate and infiltrate were both decreased in the absence of Fc γ RIII (Fig. 2, I and J), but the differences were not statistically significant. Both PG depletion and cartilage erosion were significantly decreased in Fc γ RII/III double and Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO mice, as compared with Fc γ RII and Fc γ RI/II double KO mice ($p < 0.01$, Mann-Whitney U test) (Fig. 2, K and L).

It is noteworthy to point out that we observed mild erosion of the cartilage in knee joints of aged nonimmunized Fc γ RII KO mice, which suggests that spontaneous autoimmune arthritis can develop in these mice, in addition to the reported spontaneous systemic lupus erythematosus-like phenotype (37).

It has been suggested that destruction of cartilage and bone are independent processes (38), therefore, x-ray analysis was performed to assess bone destruction. After prolonged disease (12–13 wk), severe bone damage and malformation in the joints was observed in the arthritic animals of all Fc γ R KO genotypes (Fig. 3).

Taken together, these results indicate that although Fc γ RI and Fc γ RIII are both involved in the early arthritis pathology; together, they are not absolutely required for the development of fully destructive arthritis in Fc γ RII KO mice on C57BL/6 background.

Anti-collagen Ab titers

It has been shown that Fc γ RII KO mice exhibit higher specific Ab titers after immunization compared with wild-type mice (21), and elevated anti-collagen titers have been observed during CIA, especially in sick Fc γ RII KO mice on C57BL/6 background (28).

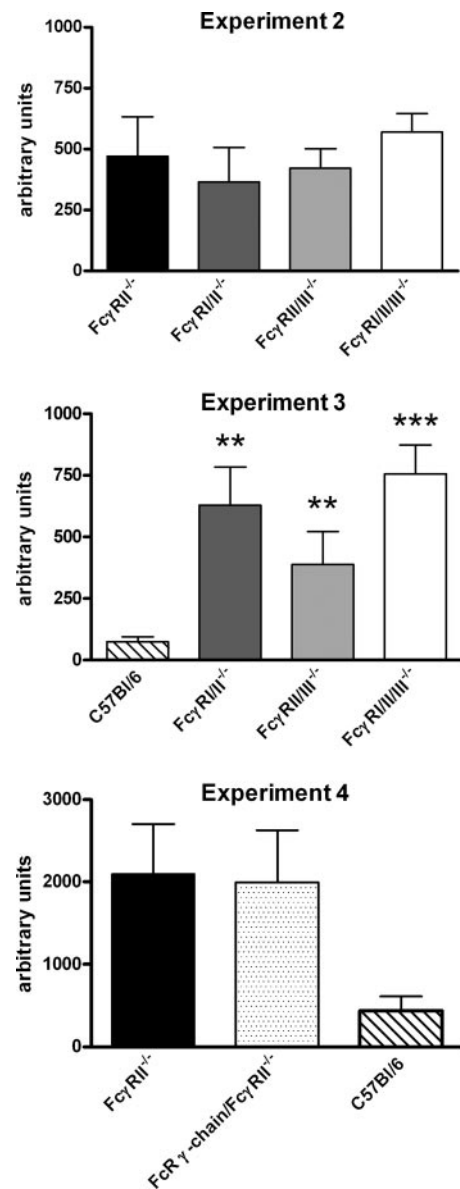


FIGURE 4. Humoral response against collagen type II in Fc γ R KO mice during CIA. Blood was collected from mice at day 42 (experiments 2 and 3) or 60 (experiment 4) after immunization and the concentration of total IgG anti-bCII was measured. The mean Ab concentration of IgG (\pm SD) is shown. Bars are labeled as follows: black—Fc γ RII KO, dark gray—Fc γ RI/II double KO, light gray—Fc γ RII/III double KO, white—Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO, dotted—FcR γ /Fc γ RII double KO, and striped—C57BL/6. Ab levels in mice lacking Fc γ RII were significantly increased compared with WT controls (*, $p < 0.05$, **, $p < 0.01$, ***, $p < 0.001$, Mann-Whitney U test).

Because differences in the titers of pathogenic collagen-specific Abs could account for the differences in severity, we analyzed anti-collagen Ab titers in blood samples taken at day 42 (experiments 1 and 2) or 60 (experiment 4) after immunization.

All strains that lack Fc γ RII exhibited higher total IgG anti-bCII titers, as compared with wild-type mice (Fig. 4). Additional deletion of one or more activating Fc γ R did not influence total anti-bCII IgG titers, confirming previous studies on CIA in FcR γ -chain KO and Fc γ RIII KO mice in DBA/1 background (12, 25). ICs which contain Abs of the IgG1 isotype preferentially bind to Fc γ RIII and Fc γ RII, whereas IgG2a IC bind with high affinity to

Table II. *K/B \times N serum-induced arthritis course in two separate experiments^a*

Experiment	Strain	Incidence	Day of Onset	Max. AT (mm)	Max. Score
Experiment 1	C57BL6	3/3	1,1,1	1.07 \pm 0.5	28.3 \pm 11.6
	Fc γ RII KO	3/3	1,1,1	1.52 \pm 0.19	51.6 \pm 2.9
	Fc γ RI/II KO	3/3	1,1,1	0.64 \pm 0.36	33.0 \pm 16.8
	Fc γ RII/III KO	5/5	1,2,2,2,4	0.70 \pm 0.24	24.6 \pm 4.7
	Fc γ RI/II/III KO	5/5	1,2,4,9,11	0.26 \pm 0.06	8.0 \pm 4.3
Experiment 2	C57BL6	3/3	1,1,1	1.7 \pm 0.06	44.0 \pm 0.5
	Fc γ RI/III KO	5/5	5,5,5,6,8	0.23 \pm 0.06	9.8 \pm 4.4
	FcR γ -chain KO	0/5	N.A.	0.05 \pm 0.01	N.A.

^a Average maximum severity scores (Max. score) and average maximum ankle thickening (Max. AT) are given as Mean \pm SEM. N.A.: Not applicable.

Fc γ RI (30, 31, 39). Fc γ RIV binds IgG2a and IgG2b IC with intermediate affinity (20, 40), therefore, subclass distribution in ICs may affect engagement of the different Fc γ R. No differences in the isotype distribution of anti-bCII titers in the different Fc γ R genotypes were found (data not shown). Therefore, it is unlikely that skewed isotype distribution of the anti-bCII titers accounts for differences in arthritis development.

K/B \times N serum-induced arthritis

To study the role of Fc γ R exclusively in the downstream effector phase of arthritis, we turned to the passively induced K/B \times N disease model (5, 7). Sera from sick K/B \times N mice were transferred into the different Fc γ R KO mice, and arthritis development was monitored as described in *Materials and Methods*. Results from two separate experiments are summarized in Table II. Fc γ RII KO mice developed more severe arthritis upon serum injection than wild-type controls (Fig. 5A). Disease progression in Fc γ RI/II double KO mice was similar to that in Fc γ RII KO mice. Fc γ RII/III double KO mice developed apparent joint inflammation with a delayed onset and significantly decreased maximum severity com-

pared with Fc γ RII KO mice ($p < 0.01$, Student's t test). All Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO mice developed disease, however, with significantly milder maximum severity than Fc γ RII/III double KO mice ($p < 0.05$, Student's t test) (Fig. 5A). In addition, Fc γ RI/III double KO mice showed mild signs of arthritis with a delayed onset, whereas FcR γ -chain KO mice were completely protected (Fig. 5B). These results with the K/B \times N serum-induced arthritis model suggest a significant role for another γ -chain dependent receptor, most likely Fc γ RIV, in the effector phase of arthritis, confirming the specific role of the different activating Fc γ R in arthritis as defined in the active CIA model.

Discussion

Although extensive investigations with a variety of mouse models of arthritis have shown that Fc γ R play a prominent role in the chronic inflammation of this autoimmune disease (41), the contribution of the individual activating Fc γ R, particularly Fc γ RI and Fc γ RIV, remains unclear. A detailed analysis of the contribution of the individual activating Fc γ R in arthritis pathology is hampered by the complexity of the IgG Fc receptor family, which

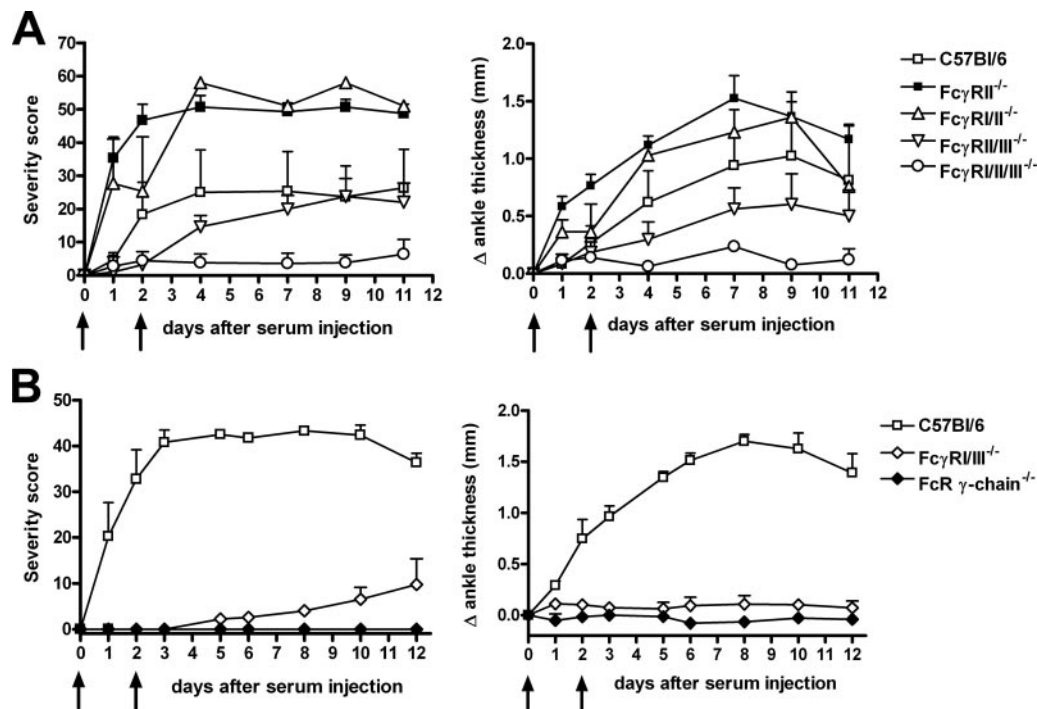


FIGURE 5. Arthritis development in Fc γ R KO mice after K/B \times N serum transfer. Mice were injected with K/B \times N sera on days 0 and 2. Arthritis was evaluated by measuring clinical index (score of 0–60) and ankle thickening as described in *Materials and Methods*. Mean \pm SEM values are depicted of 3–5 mice/group. Arthritis K/B \times N serum was transferred into the following strains: wild type (C57BL6), Fc γ RII KO, Fc γ RI/II double KO, Fc γ RII/III double KO, Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO (A), or wild type, Fc γ RI/III double KO, FcR γ -chain KO mice (B).

comprises four different members that show strong functional redundancy. In the present study, the role of the different Fc γ R in CIA and K/BxN serum-induced arthritis was analyzed in a unique set of C57BL/6 KO mice not only deficient for Fc γ RII but also for either Fc γ RI, Fc γ RIII, both, or the FcR γ -chain. The results confirmed a prominent role for Fc γ RIII, showed for the first time a role for Fc γ RI, and suggested a substantial contribution of Fc γ RIV to the downstream effector phase of CIA and in K/BxN serum-induced arthritis.

One of the most striking and consistent features of the Fc γ RII/III double KO was the delay in onset and attenuation of disease activity in both the CIA and the K/BxN serum-induced arthritis model, whereas at the end point, incidence was not affected (Figs. 1 and 5). In the early phase of CIA, cartilage destruction correlated with the level of inflammation, which was predominantly dependent on Fc γ RIII (Fig. 2), confirming results from studies in other arthritis models (13, 18). The prominent role of the low affinity Fc γ RIII can be explained by its 1) broad expression pattern (macrophages, neutrophils, mast cells, NK cells, and NKT cells); 2) relatively high basal expression level; and 3) broad specificity for IgG (IgG1 > IgG2a > IgG2b). In contrast, the expression pattern of Fc γ RI is restricted to mononuclear cells and that of Fc γ RIV to mononuclear cells and neutrophils. These cell types also express Fc γ RIII at high levels. Fc γ RI binds IgG2a with high affinity (30, 31, 39) and Fc γ RIV has been shown to bind both IgG2a and IgG2b IC with intermediate affinity in *in vitro* studies (20). Both receptors show very low affinity to IgG1 IC (20, 31). Moreover, newly formed IgG2a IC have to compete with monomeric IgG2a for binding to the high affinity Fc γ RI. Therefore, Fc γ RIII is in general more accessible to IC.

In both CIA and K/BxN serum-induced arthritis, the role of Fc γ RI became apparent only when Fc γ RIII was absent, suggesting that Fc γ RI is involved downstream of Fc γ RIII in arthritis pathology and that Fc γ RIII can compensate for the loss of Fc γ RI but not the other way around. Surprisingly, 35–40% of Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO mice developed arthritis, characterized by mild cartilage erosion in the early phase and severe cartilage damage in the late phase culminating in destruction of the underlying bone (Figs. 1–3), whereas the FcR γ -chain/Fc γ RII double KO was fully resistant. Taken together, these results indicate that another FcR γ -chain associated receptor, most likely Fc γ RIV, is sufficient for the development of CIA and suggest a shift in the requirement for the different activating Fc γ R in early and late phases of arthritis. Since the FcR γ -chain is also associated with several other receptor molecules, e.g., subset of TCR on NK T cells, subset of $\gamma\delta$ TCR on $\gamma\delta$ T cells, Pir-A on B cells, macrophages and dendritic cells, and GPIb and GPVI on blood platelets, a role of one of these receptors in CIA cannot be definitively ruled out. However, the observation that in the passive K/BxN model, in which exclusively Ab mediated down stream effector pathways are involved, the Fc γ RI/III double KO mice showed significant disease, but the FcR γ -chain KO mice did not (Fig. 5) further supports a role for Fc γ RIV as shown also recently in other IC-mediated diseases (e.g., nephrotoxic nephritis) (34).

The shift in the requirement in activating Fc γ R (Fc γ RIII to Fc γ RI/Fc γ RIV) in progressive disease possibly reflects a shift in the dominant cell types involved in the different phases of arthritis. Fc γ RIII is the only activating Fc γ R expressed on mast cells and NKT cells, both of which are cell types that have been shown to be involved in arthritis (42, 43). The expression of Fc γ RI and Fc γ RIV is low on resting macrophages and increases more strongly in response to proinflammatory cytokines than the expression of Fc γ RIII (20, 44).

On the basis of observations in the passive models of anti-CII Ab- and K/BxN serum-induced arthritis, a four stage model for the development of arthritis has been proposed (14). In stage 1, when autoantibodies have reached a critical titer, circulating IC cause macromolecular vasopermeability by triggering release of inflammatory mediators (e.g., cytokines, chemokines, and vasoactive amines) by cross linking Fc γ RIII predominantly on mast cells and neutrophils (14). Because the vasculature of the joints appears to be particularly sensitive to vasoactive amines, this allows Ab entry more specifically to the joints (14, 45). This was confirmed with *in vivo* imaging studies in the K/BxN model (45). In stage 2, Abs that recognize joint-specific structures will be retained in the joints. In stage 3, cartilage-bound IC activate complement resulting in the release of C5a, which activates many different effector cells e.g., macrophages to produce proinflammatory cytokines and chemokines attracting other effector cells. It has been shown that C5a and IFN- γ can strongly up-regulate Fc γ RI and Fc γ RIV on the resident and recruited effector cells e.g., macrophages ((18, 20, 46); unpublished results). This may explain why in other models, such as in AIA, where IFN- γ probably plays a more prominent role, a clear shift from Fc γ RIII toward Fc γ RI dependency was observed (27). In stage 4, chronic inflammation results in cartilage destruction and ultimately destruction of the underlying bone. The results presented here, demonstrating a prominent role for Fc γ RIII and a substantial delay in the onset of the disease in the absence of this receptor, together with the published observations that neutrophils (47) and C5 (11) are indispensable in the development of this disease, strongly suggest that in the active model of CIA the same stages can be recognized.

Since GPI is present in the circulation while collagen is not, the GPI-specific serum from K/BxN mice directly forms macromolecular vasopermeability inducing IC in the circulation resulting in a more effective induction of arthritis compared with the induction of arthritis by anti-collagen Abs/anti-serum. The development of anti-CII Ab-induced arthritis is strongly accelerated by *i.v.* injection of irrelevant IC, which induces the required macromolecular vasopermeability (14). Most likely, in CIA when the boost with collagen is given while anti-collagen Abs are already present in the circulation, IC are formed in the blood, which cause the required macromolecular vasopermeability.

The inhibitory Fc γ RII regulates the immune response on multiple levels, from Ag presentation through B cell response to activation of effector cells (48, 49). Moreover, we have previously shown that Fc γ RII contributes substantially to the clearance of IC (50). In CIA, all strains deficient for Fc γ RII exhibited higher anti-bCII titers compared with wild-type controls, as expected (28). In the K/BxN serum-induced arthritis, Fc γ RII inhibited the effector phase confirming results of a previous study (29). These data indicate that Fc γ RII negatively regulates both the central and effector phase of arthritis.

Remarkably, in the substantially different arthritis models of CIA and K/BxN serum-induced arthritis, for each individual Fc γ R class similar specific roles could be defined.

Furthermore, the absence of activating Fc γ R did not alter specific Ab levels in CIA, consistent with previous reports (12, 25). Taken together, these observations strengthen the view that activating Fc γ R are preferentially involved in the end-stage effector phase of arthritis. Since it is reported that IgG1, an isotype that does not interact with Fc γ RI and Fc γ RIV (20, 31), is the dominant subclass of anti-GPI IgG in the K/BxN serum (51), a role of Fc γ RI and Fc γ RIV in the passive K/BxN serum-induced arthritis model was somewhat unexpected. However, the small but significant response in Fc γ RIII KO mice, the lack of a response in FcR γ -chain KO mice, and a response in Fc γ RI KO mice indistinguishable

from the response of wild-type mice upon injection of K/BxN serum we reported in the past (11) suggests that another FcR γ -chain associated receptor is involved (probably Fc γ RIV), implicating also that another subclass of IgG, most likely IgG2b, may be present in the serum. Moreover, in contrast to the generally used KRN TCR transgenic mouse on NOD background, in the study presented here a KRN on B10 background, congenic for the required MHC g7, was used as a source for arthritic serum. A direct comparison of serum preparations from both mouse strains in an anti-GPI ELISA revealed that the KRNxB10g7 serum contains a substantially increased amount of IgG2a anti-GPI compared with the KRNxNOD serum. In contrast, the anti-GPI IgG1 and the significant IgG2b titers did not differ between the two sera (data not shown).

Up to 40% of the Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO mice developed CIA with destruction of cartilage and bone in the late phase of the disease indistinguishable from the same type of destruction in Fc γ RII KO mice. In contrast, K/BxN serum induced a very mild disease, as measured by joint swelling, in Fc γ RI/II/III triple KO mice compared with the severe disease in Fc γ RII KO mice. This relative difference between CIA and K/BxN serum-induced arthritis might reflect differences in the contribution of other immune cells like T cells and NK cells in the two arthritis models. In the active chronic CIA model, activated T cells might serve as a source of cytokines, such as IFN- γ , which enhance Fc γ RI and Fc γ RIV expression resulting in a stronger contribution of these receptors to the down stream effector pathways.

The results presented here show some discrepancy to the results of previous studies, (12, 25, 52) which have shown a dominant role for Fc γ RIII and little or no role for the other FcR γ -chain associated activating Fc receptors. This can be explained by the much higher anti-collagen Ab titers of the arthritic mice in the present study due to the absence of Fc γ RII (Fig. 4). In the model of experimental autoimmune hemolytic anemia, we have shown that at low concentrations of an anti-mouse erythrocyte IgG2a autoantibody the development of the disease fully depends on Fc γ RIII, whereas at high concentrations of the same Ab disease development depends on Fc γ RIII and Fc γ RI (30). Interestingly, the majority of the Fc γ RII/III double KO mice develop arthritis with a delayed onset, after day 60 (Fig. 1E), which indicates that the role of Fc γ RIII was somewhat overestimated in previous studies in which CIA experiments were terminated on day 60 or 90 (25, 52). Given the chronic nature of RA, human homologues of Fc γ RI and Fc γ RIV might therefore play a significant role in the pathology of arthritis.

In conclusion, using two murine arthritis models, the active CIA and the passive K/BxN serum-induced arthritis, in a unique set of Fc γ R KO strains, we have further elucidated the role of the individual Fc γ R in arthritis pathology. In addition to a role for Fc γ RIII, we have identified a significant role for Fc γ RI, and another FcR γ -chain associated receptor, most likely Fc γ RIV, in the end-stage effector phase of arthritis.

Human studies did not reveal a strong association between RA and polymorphisms in the human Fc γ R gene family, except for Fc γ RIIIA (53). Recently it was shown that copy number polymorphism of the activating Fc γ RIIIb predisposes to the chronic inflammatory disease of glomerulonephritis in both rats and humans (54). This observation draws attention to copy number polymorphisms as a possible risk factor for the development of arthritis. Our results suggest that it is highly relevant to analyze copy number polymorphisms of all activating Fc γ R. Gaining a better insight into Fc γ R function in autoimmune diseases will provide valuable information for the rational design of therapeutics.

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Disclosures

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