THE FETAL-PLACENTAL UNIT AS AN ALLOGRAFT:
BREAKAGE OF THE FETAL MATERNAL TOLERANCE IN PREECLAPSIA

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This study highlights the greatest message addressed by pregnancy:

“THE TOLERANCE OF BIODIVERSITY”
In fact, the placenta acts as an immunological barrier between the mother and fetal “graft” allowing two antigenically different organisms to tolerate one another.

Edwards, 1995
It is clear that any damage to this barrier from various ischemic risk factors (metabolic, hormonal, genetic, immunological) may be responsible for lesions of the syncytiotrophoblast and villous vessels endothelial cells as we demonstrated by electron microscopy.
Ultrastructural study of the human placental endothelium in preeclampsia

de Luca Brunori I., Lenzi P., Paparelli A. et al.
Gestosis and fetal rejection: immunopathogenetic role of HLA-DR

de Luca Brunori I., Battini L., Simonelli M. et al.
To verify this rejection’s hypothesis, we examined placentae from preeclamptic patients and controls by immunohistochemical technique and HLA-DR monoclonal antibody.

Immunohistochemical study of placental endothelium in physiologic and gestosis-complicated pregnancies by HLA-DR monoclonal antibodies

de Luca Brunori I., Battini L., Simonelli M. et al.
HLA-DR falls under human class II of the Major Histocompatibility Complex (MHC) and it identifies several elements involved in activating and maintaining immunitary response (limphocytes, macrophages, cell T activated, endothelial cells). Therefore, HLA-DR plays a fundamental role in self and non-self recognition and in rejective reaction.
To understand the mechanism at the basis of such an evident immunological reaction in Preeclampsia, we undertook a study to evaluate if Preeclampsia, like transplant rejection, could be related to the immunological role of the HLA-DR Antigens.
Increased HLA-DR homozygosity associated with preeclampsia

de Luca Brunori, I., Battini, M. Simonelli et al.
In this study HLA-DR was typed in 70 preeclamptic women, their partners 70 healthy control couples by serological Terasaki technique.

20 cases out of the preeclamptic couples 20 control couples were typed by low resolution PCR
HLA-DR TYPING RESULTS

Homozygosity

- Preeclampsia: 67.1%
- Controls: 7.9%

Heterozygosity

- Preeclampsia: 32.9%
- Controls: 92.1%

P < 0.00001
### Homozygosity Distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Preeclampsia</th>
<th>Controls</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>N (%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>26 (37.1%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>1 (1.4%)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Female</strong></td>
<td>22 (31.4%)</td>
<td>5 (7.1%)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>20 (28.6%)</td>
<td>4 (5.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HLA-DR</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preeclampsia</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>controls</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28</td>
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These results show that parents associated with preeclamptic pregnancies generally possess homozygosity and/or a small total number (less than 3) of different HLA-DR types than control couples according to Redman et al. 1978.
INCREASED V-CAM 1 PLASMATIC LEVELS IN EPH GESTOSIS: A MARKER OF FETAL REJECTION?

I. de Luca Brunori, L. Battini, M. Simonelli, A.R. Genazzani
Fig. 2. Levels of VCAM-1 and creatinine were monitored in a patient following renal allograft at day 0. VCAM-1 levels appeared to rise coincident with, or slightly before, the rise in creatinine, the routine monitor of graft function. Information courtesy of Prof. A. Rees and Dr. J. Hughes, Hammersmith Hospital, London, UK.
DISCUSSION

Redman et al. (1978) found maternal homozygosity HLA-A and B in severe preeclampsia and asserted, in agreement with Jenkins et al., that the reduced HLA-Class I antigenical variety between partners could be the cause of the failure of maternal protective reaction.
maternal immunological failure

→

impaired trophoblastic implantation

→

high resistance haemocirculatory placental district

→

severe endothelial damage
HLA-DR homozygosity

Reduced antigenical variety

Failure of maternal immunological protective reaction

Preeclampsia
This highlights an important message: Reproductive outcome is particularly successful in couples of heterozygous partners.
Biodiversity enhances survival and reproduction
Welcome to biodiversity
UPDATE

HLA-DRβ1 alleles DNA sequencing:
preliminary results
In this update we have examined the 2nd exon of the human gene, HLA-DRβ1, on the short arm of the chromosome 6 using the DNA sequence-based typing (S-BT) PCR.
Match-tools genetic program

Sample: 1881  
Library: DRB1.L226  
Preliminary Report: Exact match to: DRB1*1301/1302. See Warnings Below.

Files: 1881

Polymorphic Position Report

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<th>nucleotide</th>
<th>number</th>
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<tr>
<td>11 111111111 111111111 1111111222 2222222222 2222222222 22</td>
<td>4445777788 8888999900 0011111134 4445567777 7777799000 1111111222 3333355555 67</td>
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<td>0268747802 4789147912 5902367930 3692990123 4578969789 0124568012 0123402478 40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

GGCTTGCTCTG CATATCACAG GAAGTGTGT GCTCGGATGC CGGTAGAAGA CGACGGCGCG CCTACGGTGGG CA <> 1881 consensus


Differently from other techniques like SSO-PCR or SSP-PCR, in which the alleles discrimination is indirectly performed, the DNA sequencing allows us to directly read the nucleotides sequences occurring in the alleles.

Then it is possible to truly identify the real homozgyosity whereas the other techniques were only able to evaluate the presumed homozygosity.
CASES STUDY

Study group: 56 couples of preeclamptic women

Control group: 64 couples of physiologic pregnant women
HLA-DRβ1 Typing Results

- **Homozygosity**
  - Preeclampsia: 65.1%
  - Controls: 5.2%
  - P value: <0.00001

- **Heterozygosity**
  - Preeclampsia: 34.9%
  - Controls: 94.8%
The HLA-DRβ1 second exon sequencing has demonstrated:

- the presence of a **real homozygosity** in preeclampsia
- the **not recurrence** of a particular known HLA-DRβ1 allele
- the **absence** of a new HLA-DRβ1 allele
- the **absence** of punctiform mutations
HLA-DRβ1 homozygosity

Preeclampsia

Couple’s disease
SUMMARIZING

from our results various evidences seem to confirm the hypothesis of a
“fetal rejection in preeclampsia“

1) The ultra-microscopical evidence of the placental endothelial breakage in preeclampsia

2) The immunohistochemical evidence of the intense and widespread HLA-DR antigens expression in placentae from preeclampsia versus controls
3) The significant HLA-DR homozygosity excess in Couples of preeclamptic women versus controls, as confirmed also by DNA-sequencing.

4) The significant increase of V-CAM 1 plasmatic levels, as demonstrated in other graft rejective reactions.

5) Last, but not least, the clinical evidence that preeclamptic syndrome, quickly disappears after pregnancy interruption, as the fetus could be the cause of a maternal rejective reaction
THIS STUDIES HIGHLIGHTS FROM AN IMMUNOGENETIC POINT OF VIEW, THE IMPORTANCE OF “BIODIVERSITY” FOR REPRODUCTION
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION