Development of a drug and device for an efficient alveolar delivery of a neutralizing monoclonal antibody to treat pulmonary intoxication to ricin

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The high toxicity of ricin and its ease of production have made it a major bioterrorism threat worldwide. However there is no efficient and approved treatment for ricin inhalation poisoning, though major improvements have been made in terms of (ricin intoxication) diagnosis, and therapeutic strategies. We describe for the first time the development of an anti-ricin neutralizing monoclonal antibody (IgG 43RCA-G1) and a device allowing its rapid and effective delivery into the lungs for an application in humans. The antibody is a full-length IgG and bound to ricin A-chain subunit with a high affinity (KD=53 pM). Its local administration into the respiratory tract of mice 6 hours after ricin pulmonary intoxication allowed the rescue of 100% of intoxicated animals. Specific constraints for use in operational conditions and aerosolization stresses associated with protein aggregation and loss of activity were overcome by formulating the drug as a dry-powder that is solubilized extemporaneously in a stabilizing solution to be nebulized. Although regulatory studies are required, the inhalable formulation of IgG 43RCA-G1 did not induce any pulmonary inflammation in mice. A mesh nebulizer was customized to improve IgG 43RCA-G1 deposition into the alveolar region of human lungs, where ricin aerosol particles mainly accumulate. The drug & device also comprises a semi-automatic reconstitution system to facilitate its use and a unique holding chamber to maximize the aerosol delivery in the deep lung. In vivo studies in non-human primates showed that drug delivery with the device resulted in a high concentration of IgG 43RCA-G1 into the airways for at least 6 hours after local deposition, which is consistent with the therapeutic window, and in a limited passage into the bloodstream.

This work was supported by a public grant overseen by the French National Research Agency (ANR) as part of the “Investissements d’Avenir” program (reference: ANR-10-LABX -53-01).
This work was supported in part by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) of the United States National Institutes of Health (NIH) through Grant Number 5R21 AI080987 for Dr Kam-Meng Tchou-Wong.
This work was supported in part by the National Center for Research Resources and the Office of Research Infrastructure Programs (ORIP) of the United States National Institutes of Health (NIH) through Grant Number OD011104 to the Tulane National Primate Research Center.
It was also supported by grants provided by Région Centre (Stabimed and PCMAC) and the DGA (Direction Générale des Armées - Project RAPID – AeroRiMac grant).