Sphingosine-1-phosphate receptor-1 (S1P₁) is expressed by lymphocytes, dendritic cells, and endothelium and modulated during inflammatory bowel disease

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The sphingosine-1-phosphate receptor-1 (S1P₁) agonist ozanimod ameliorates ulcerative colitis, yet its mechanism of action is unknown. Here, we examine the cell subsets that express S1P₁ in intestine using S1P₁-eGFP mice, the regulation of S1P₁ expression in lymphocytes after administration of dextran sulfate sodium (DSS), after colitis induced by transfer of CD4⁺CD45RB^{hi} cells, and by crossing a mouse with TNF-driven ileitis with S1P₁-eGFP mice. We then assayed the expression of enzymes that regulate intestinal S1P levels, and the effect of FTY720 on lymphocyte behavior and S1P₁ expression. We found that not only T and B cells express S1P₁, but also dendritic (DC) and endothelial cells. Furthermore, chronic but not acute inflammatory signals increased S1P₁ expression, while the enzymes that control tissue S1P levels in mice and humans with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) were uniformly dysregulated, favoring synthesis over degradation. Finally, we observed that FTY720 reduced T-cell velocity and induced S1P₁ degradation and retention of Naïve but not effector T cells. Our data demonstrate that chronic inflammation modulates S1P₁ expression and tissue S1P levels and suggests that the anti-inflammatory properties of S1PR agonists might not be solely due to their lymphopenic effects, but also due to potential effects on DC migration and vascular barrier function.

INTRODUCTION

Antibodies that target lymphocyte traffic (i.e., natalizumab and vedolizumab) are effective therapeutics for inflammatory bowel disease (IBD),^{1–3} yet they are expensive to produce and administer. Novel drugs that may be administered orally have the potential to become widely used alternatives. A recent trial of the selective sphingosine-1-phosphate receptor-1 (S1P₁) agonist (ozanimod) in patients with ulcerative colitis (UC)⁴ has met all primary and secondary end points, while a new phase 2 trial in patients with Crohn's will soon begin recruiting subjects. Yet, little is known regarding the potential mechanisms of action of this drug, or its cellular targets in the intestine, either in UC or in Crohn's.

S1P is a pleiotropic sphingolipid metabolite with diverse physiological and immunological functions.^{5,6} The concentration gradient of S1P between tissues (low) and blood (high) regulates S1P₁-mediated lymphocyte egress from thymus and lymph nodes to circulation.⁷ S1P signals through five G-protein-coupled receptors (S1P_{1–5}).^{8,9} S1P₁, originally known as endothelial differentiation gene-1 (Edg-1), inhibits angiogenic sprouting and enhances cell-to-cell adhesion by regulating VE-cadherin at endothelial junctions during embryogenesis.¹⁰ In adult vertebrates, it regulates vascular and lymphatic permeability, astrocyte proliferation, neuronal protection,¹¹ lymphocyte egress and marginal B-cell migration in secondary lymphoid organs,^{12,13} heart rate,¹⁴ endothelial

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Received 11 December 2015; accepted 7 March 2016; published online 6 April 2016. doi:10.1038/mi.2016.35

integrity,¹⁵ and ischemia-reperfusion injury.¹⁶ Thus, there is a vast array of possibilities for the mechanisms of action of compounds that bind and signal through this receptor.

Herein, we used preclinical IBD models and intestinal biopsies from patients with IBD to investigate the role of the S1P pathway on the pathogenesis of the disease. First, we analyzed the expression of S1P₁ on cells isolated from the intestine and mesenteric lymph nodes (MLNs) and assessed the modulation of S1P₁ under conditions of acute and chronic inflammation. Second, we analyzed the expression of key enzymes that regulate S1P levels in mouse models and in patients with IBD. Finally, we assessed the effect of the non-selective agonist FTY720 on lymphocyte behavior and S1P₁ expression.

RESULTS

Lymphocytes, dendritic and endothelial cells of intestinal lamina propria and MLN express S1P₁

To identify the cellular targets for S1P₁-selective agonists we assessed the surface expression of S1P₁ on T and endothelial cells (ECs) using commercial antibodies. S1P₁ expression was not different, compared with isotype on freshly isolated cells (**Supplementary Figure S1** online) or after culture for 24 h in fetal bovine serum/S1P-free media to allow receptor resensitization (data not shown). We then assessed S1P₁ expression on cells from intestinal lamina propria (LP) and MLN isolated from S1P₁-eGFP mice.¹⁷ S1P₁ signal was readily observed on CD4, CD8, B cells, dendritic cell (DC), and EC (CD45^{neg}CD31⁺). Cells from C57BL/6/J mice (without eGFP:

eGFP^{neg}) served as controls (**Figure 1a–d**). Immunohistochemistry confirmed the expression of S1P₁ on intestinal EC (which exhibited the strongest signal), within the villous microvasculature and submucosal vessels (**Figure 1d1**). The dimmer signal of T cells and DC was not visible under the same conditions. High endothelial venules and lymphatics in the periphery of B-cell follicles of MLN showed the strongest signal (**Figure 1d2**), whereas the signal from lymphocytes was undetectable. Overall, the observed expression pattern was consistent with a role of S1P₁ on the regulation of key cellular elements known to control such as cell traffic to and from the intestine, gastrointestinal-associated lymphoid tissue, and peripheral circulation.

Naïve and central memory CD8⁺ T cells and subsets of effector T cells from intestine and MLN predominantly express S1P₁

Naïve (CD44^{neg}CD62L⁺) and central memory (CM) (CD44⁺CD62L⁺) CD4⁺T cells in ileal LP and MLN showed higher median fluorescent intensity (MFI) for S1P₁ compared with effector (CD44⁺CD62L[−]) CD4⁺T cells. Similarly, Naïve and CM CD8⁺T cells showed higher S1P₁ MFI than effectors. However, CD8⁺T cells from LP and MLN showed higher S1P₁ MFI than CD4⁺T cells isolated from the same tissue (**Figure 2a–c**). In line with these *ex vivo* findings, we observed reduced S1P₁ expression in splenocytes from S1P₁-eGFP mice following *in vitro* activation with phorbol 12-myristate 13-acetate/ionomycin or antibodies against CD3/CD28 (**Supplementary Figure S2**). Thus, our results show that Naïve and CM CD8⁺T cells isolated from MLN exhibit the highest expression of S1P₁.

Figure 1 Expression of sphingosine-1-phosphate receptor-1 (S1P₁) on T, B, dendritic (DCs), and endothelial cells (ECs). (**a**, **b**) Flow-cytometry gating strategy (left panels) and S1P₁-eGFP signal of CD4⁺T, CD8⁺T, and B cells isolated from ileal lamina propria (LP) and mesenteric lymph node (MLN) of S1P₁-eGFP mice. Representative histograms (right panels) from indicated cell subsets. (**c**) Flow-cytometry analyses of DC (CD11c^{hi} MHC II^{hi}) gated as shown, isolated from ileal LP and MLN of S1P₁-eGFP mice. Representative histograms. (**d**) Flow-cytometry analyses of ECs (CD31⁺CD45^{neg}) isolated from ileal LP (upper panels) of S1P₁-eGFP mice. Immunohistochemical localization of S1P₁ in ileum (D1) and on high endothelial venules and lymphatics of MLN (D2). Representative plots and images from three or more independent experiments, $n \geq 3$ or more mice/group.

Figure 2 Expression of sphingosine-1-phosphate receptor-1 (S1P₁) is higher on Naïve, central memory (CM) CD8⁺T cells, and activated dendritic cells (DCs). (a) Gating strategy for Naïve (CD44⁺CD62L⁺), effector (CD44⁺CD62L⁺), and CM (CD44⁺CD62L⁺) CD4⁺ and CD8⁺T cells isolated from ileal lamina propria (LP) and mesenteric lymph node (MLN) of S1P₁-eGFP mice. (b, c) Median fluorescent intensity (MFI) and representative histograms for S1P₁ expression by Naïve, effector, and CM CD4⁺ and CD8⁺T cells from indicated compartments. (d) Gating strategy for DC (CD11c^{high}/MHCII^{high}) isolated from the ileum and MLN of S1P₁-eGFP mice and gated further based on their costimulatory molecule (CD40, CD80, and CD86) expression. (e, f) MFI and representative histograms for S1P₁ expression by activated DC (CD40⁺, CD80⁺, and CD86⁺), compared with that of CD40⁻, CD80⁻, and CD86⁻ DC. **P* < 0.05, ***P* < 0.01, ****P* < 0.001 by two-tailed *t*-test. Data are shown as mean ± s.e.m., *n* = 3 mice/group and representative histograms from three independent experiments.

Activated mucosal DCs show high S1P₁ expression

We then examined S1P₁ expression on immature and activated DC subsets, based on their costimulatory molecule expression (i.e., CD40, CD80, and CD86) (Figure 2d–f). Activated DCs (CD40⁺, CD80⁺, and CD86⁺) in ileal LP and MLN of WT/S1P₁-eGFP mice showed significantly higher MFI for S1P₁, compared with those immature DC with low costimulatory molecule expression. These results demonstrate that the state of DC maturation correlates with the expression of S1P₁.

Subset of CD4 from MLN co-expresses high levels of S1P₁ and gut-homing molecules

Effector T cells that have the ability to recirculate are critical for the maintenance of intestinal inflammation in IBD.¹⁸ As gut tropism is mediated through the expression of intestinal-

selective cell adhesion molecules, we hypothesized that whether S1P₁ participates in the recruitment of pro-inflammatory, effector T cells, then it should be co-expressed with these gut-specific factors. To test our hypothesis, we analyzed S1P₁ expression on effector (CD62L^{neg}CD44⁺) CD4 and CD8 subsets that expressed the critical gut-homing molecules CCR9 and integrin β7. We found no significant differences in expression of S1P₁ on either CD4 or CD8 effectors that were localized within the ileal LP. However, in the MLN the CD4 subset with the highest expression of integrin β7 and CCR9 also showed the highest expression for S1P₁ (Supplementary Figure S3). In contrast, only a much smaller percentage of the CD8 within the MLN co-expressed high levels of S1P₁, integrin β7, and/or CCR9. This suggests that there might be differences in the recirculation potential of CD4 and CD8 effectors.

Acute inflammatory signals did not modulate S1P₁ expression on T cells

We induced colitis in S1P₁-eGFP mice by the administration of dextran sulfate sodium (DSS) in drinking water. Colitis was confirmed by weight loss, shortening of colon length at necropsy, and histologically evident inflammation after 7 days (Figure 3a–d). We did not observe significant differences in S1P₁ expression between CD4⁺T and CD8⁺T lymphocytes isolated from the colon, MLN, or blood of colitic animals compared with untreated controls (Figure 3e,f). Thus, S1P₁ expression on T cells is not readily responsive to acute inflammatory signals.

Surface expression of S1P₁ on mucosal effector CD4⁺T cells is increased in mice with chronic colitis

Colitis was induced by transfer of Treg-depleted CD4⁺CD45RB^{hi} T cells, isolated from S1P₁-eGFP mice into Rag1^{-/-} mice. Controls were co-transferred with regulatory T cell-enriched CD45RB^{lo} cells. The development of colitis was indicated by weight loss at 3 weeks after cell transfer and confirmed by significant changes in the histological scores of mice transferred with CD4⁺CD45RB^{hi} cells compared with controls (Figure 4a–c). The frequency of CD4⁺T cells increased in colonic LP, MLN, and blood of mice with chronic colitis (Figure 4d,e), which showed higher MFI for S1P₁ in all lymphoid compartments, compared with those co-transferred with CD4⁺CD45RB^{lo} cells (Figure 4f). Thus, unlike acute DSS colitis, S1P₁ expression on effector T cells is modulated by chronic inflammatory signals.

S1P₁ expression increased on T cells isolated from mice with chronic ileitis

To further examine the role of chronic inflammation on S1P₁ expression in mice with an intact immune system, we generated TNFAARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice (referred to as TNFAARE) by crossing heterozygous TNFAARE (TNFA^{ARE/+}/S1P₁^{wt/wt}) with S1P₁^{eGFP/eGFP} (referred to as WT) mice. The intensity of S1P₁ expression was higher only on Naïve CD4⁺T cells and Naïve and CM CD8⁺T cells isolated from the ileal LP of TNFAARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice. By contrast in the MLN all CD8 subsets (Naïve, effector, CM) as well as Naïve and effector

Figure 3 Acute inflammation did not modulate the expression of sphingosine-1-phosphate receptor-1 (S1P₁) on T cells. S1P₁-eGFP mice were treated with 3% dextran sulfate sodium (DSS) or H₂O (vehicle) for 7 days. (a, b) Weight loss curves and shortening of colon length (mm) of mice receiving DSS or H₂O. (c) Histological inflammatory indices in colon of mice treated with DSS or H₂O. (d) Representative micrographs of colon of S1P₁-eGFP mice treated with DSS or H₂O. (e) Flow-cytometric analysis of CD4⁺T and CD8⁺T cells isolated from colonic lamina propria (LP) of S1P₁-eGFP mice treated with DSS or H₂O. (f) Bar graph represents median fluorescent intensity (MFI) for S1P₁ expression by CD4⁺T and CD8⁺T cells from colonic LP, mesenteric lymph node (MLN), and blood of S1P₁-eGFP mice treated with DSS or H₂O. Representative histograms. Scale bar, 200 μ m. Shaded histograms are control for eGFP (eGFP⁻); line and dashed histograms are from DSS- and H₂O-treated mice, respectively. Data are shown as mean $\pm$ s.e.m. * P <0.05, ** P <0.01, *** P <0.001 by two-tailed t -test, n =5 mice/group.

CD4⁺T cells showed significantly higher MFI for S1P₁ compared with uninflamed mice (Figure 5a,b). There was a significant increase in the number of CD11c^{hi}/MHCII^{hi} DC in ileal LP, MLN, and spleen (*** P <0.001; * P <0.05; and * P <0.05, respectively) of TNFAARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice compared with WT mice (Figure 5c); and the expression of S1P₁ was significantly higher in DC from all compartments compared with those of uninflamed WT counterparts.

Endothelial S1P₁ expression was also increased in TNFAARE mice, where there were numerous S1P₁-expressing microvessels throughout the intestinal submucosa and muscularis (Figure 5d). Increased S1P₁ eGFP signal likely reflects the altered vascular density in the inflamed ileal mucosa of

TNFAARE mice (Supplementary Videos S1 and S2) and suggest that S1P₁ is modulated by chronic inflammatory signals not only on T cells, but also on EC.

The enzymatic pathways that control tissue S1P levels are similarly dysregulated in intestinal tissues from mouse models and human IBD

We then compared the mRNA expression of critical enzymes that phosphorylate sphingosine (kinases: Sphk1, Sphk2), dephosphorylate S1P (phosphatases: Sgpp1, Sgpp2), degrade S1P (lyase, Sgpl1), as well as of the transporter that transfers S1P from intracellular to extracellular compartments (Spns2) in uninflamed and inflamed intestine from mice and humans. We observed a uniform pattern of dysregulation, in which mRNA expression of inducible sphingosine kinase-1 was upregulated, while kinase-2 was downregulated. Both phosphatases were often downregulated, while mRNA for the transporter was increased in most preclinical models and human IBD (Figure 6). This pattern of dysregulation suggests alterations in the S1P gradient between intestine, lymph nodes, and blood, which may serve as a retention signal within intestine.

FTY720 decreases the velocity of MLN T cells and differentially alters the proportion of circulating lymphocytes in ileitic mice

To examine the effects of S1PR agonists on lymphocyte behavior within MLN, we imaged MLN explants of TNFAARE mice that had received T cells from DsRed mice, before and after administration of FTY720-P. T-cell velocity decreased after addition of FTY720-P within MLN (Figure 7a); and the directionality of the cell movement was also altered.

TNFAARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice treated with FTY720 for 6 weeks exhibited peripheral lymphopenia, with lower number of blood CD4⁺T cells (** P <0.01), CD8⁺T cells (** P <0.01), and B220⁺ cells (*** P <0.001) compared with vehicle-treated controls (data not shown). The lymphopenic effect was greater on circulating Naïve and CM CD4 and CD8 than on effectors (Figure 7b). In addition, the MFI for S1P₁ on CD4⁺T cells; CD8⁺T cells, and B220⁺ and ECs was significantly lower in TNFAARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice after FTY720 treatment, compared with vehicle-treated controls (Figure 7c). As the GFP tag is at the carboxy terminus, the decreased S1P₁ signal is not due to internalization but due to S1P₁ degradation. Taken together, these results show that S1PR agonists alter cell behavior within the MLN, predominantly decrease Naïve and CM T-cell subsets from circulation and induce degradation of the receptor on lymphocytes and EC.

DISCUSSION

The dual efficacy of alpha-4 integrin blockade (natalizumab) in multiple sclerosis (MS) and Crohn's has set a precedent for parallel trafficking mechanisms between these immune-mediated diseases. The therapeutic efficacy of S1PR agonists in MS and UC might represent the next example of shared pathogenetic mechanisms. FTY720, a small-molecule agonist of S1P_{1,3,4,5} was the first oral drug for the treatment of MS,¹⁹

Figure 4 Chronic inflammation upregulated sphingosine-1-phosphate receptor-1 (S1P₁) on adoptively transferred T cells after development of colitis. CD4⁺CD45RB^{hi} cells from S1P₁-eGFP mice were adoptively transferred into Rag1^{-/-} mice. Control group was co-transferred with CD4⁺CD45RB^{lo} cells. **(a)** Weight loss curve suggests the development of colitis after 3 weeks post cell transfer. **(b, c)** Histological assessment of colon confirmed development of colitis compared with co-transferred controls. **(d)** Gating strategy for effector CD4⁺ T cells isolated from colon of mice with and without colitis. **(e)** Percentage of effector CD4⁺ in mice with and without colitis. **(f)** Median fluorescent intensity (MFI) for S1P₁ expression by effector CD4⁺ T cells in colon, mesenteric lymph node (MLN), and blood in mice with and without colitis. Representative histograms. Data are shown as mean ± s.e.m. **P* < 0.05, ***P* < 0.01, ****P* < 0.001 by two-tailed *t*-test, *n* = 4 mice/group.

while ozanimod, an S1P₁-selective agent, has shown efficacy in patients with UC.⁴ Thus, it is worthwhile to examine the role of the S1P pathway during immune cell traffic to the chronically inflamed intestine. Here, we show that Naïve and CM and subsets of gut-homing effectors (particularly CD8⁺) T cells, activated DC and EC express S1P₁. Although acute inflammatory signals did not increase S1P₁ expression on T cells, chronic inflammatory signals upregulated S1P₁, not only on T cells, but also on endothelium. We found a very similar pattern of dysregulation of the enzymes that control tissue S1P levels in inflamed mouse and human intestine, with induction of S1P synthesis and suppression of degradation, which suggests that S1P levels in the intestine are altered. FTY720 promoted S1P₁ degradation and predominantly depleted Naïve and CM T cells from circulation, while effector T cells mobilized to the periphery.

In the past, even the basic characterization of cell subsets that express S1P receptors has been challenging, as these receptors

internalize upon ligand binding, where they may be degraded or recirculate back to the cell surface.²⁰ Technical aspects are further complicated by the lack of reliable reagents. Indeed, a commercially available anti-S1P₁ antibody did not detect differences in antibody binding on any cell type.

Antibodies that target alpha-4 integrins, such as vedolizumab and natalizumab, ameliorate IBD by interfering with the traffic of antigen-experienced gut-homing effector T cells, which are recruited to the intestine at postcapillary venules. Yet effector cells lack L-selectin (CD62L), which has been linked to S1P₁ expression.²¹ Interestingly, we observed that although L-selectin-expressing Naïve and CM CD4⁺ T and CD8⁺ T cells expressed S1P₁, there were subsets of effectors CD4⁺ and CD8⁺ within the MLN that also exhibited high S1P₁ expression. Interference with recruitment of gut-homing effector (rather than Naïve) T cells at postcapillary venules is most in line with the mechanism of action of natalizumab and vedolizumab. Consistent with a potential role for S1P₁ at this

Figure 5 Chronic inflammation modulated sphingosine-1-phosphate receptor-1 (S1P₁) expression on T, dendritic (DCs), and endothelial cells of TNFAARE mice. **(a, b)** Naïve (CD44⁺CD62L⁺), effector (CD44⁺CD62L⁺), and central memory (CM: CD44⁺CD62L⁺) CD4⁺ and CD8⁺ T cells were isolated from ileal lamina propria (LP) and mesenteric lymph node (MLN) of S1P₁-eGFP (WT) and TNFAARE/S1P₁-eGFP (TNFAARE) mice and gated as shown. Bar graph represents median fluorescent intensity (MFI) for S1P₁ expression by total, Naïve, effector, and CM CD4⁺ T and CD8⁺ T cells from ileum LP and MLN of TNFAARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice compared with S1P₁-eGFP mice. Representative histograms. **(c)** Absolute counts of DC (CD11c^{hi} MHCII^{hi} cells) from ileal LP, MLN, and spleen of TNFAARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice compared with S1P₁-eGFP mice. MFI for S1P₁ expression by DC in indicated tissues of S1P₁-eGFP and TNFAARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice. Representative histograms. **(d)** Immunohistochemistry and three-dimensional reconstruction of ileum for S1P₁ expression in mice with and without ileitis. Data are shown as mean $\pm$ s.e.m. * P < 0.05, ** P < 0.01, *** P < 0.001 by two-tailed t -test, n = 5 mice/group.

level, we observed S1P₁-expressing microvessels localized to submucosal areas. In MLN, S1P₁ was predominantly observed within high endothelial venule-like structures within germinal centers and surrounding T-cell zones of MLN, consistent with its known role on Naïve T-cell traffic. This pattern of expression within key cellular mediators of leukocyte recruitment to intestine and associated lymphoid tissues suggests that the S1PR agonists might act through additional mechanisms, beyond Naïve T-cell retention within thymus and lymph nodes.

S1P has a role in the migration of DC from skin and lung to draining lymph nodes^{22,23} and that of mature bone marrow DCs via S1P₃.^{6,24} Activated DCs migrate to lymph nodes to initiate T-cell and B-cell responses, based upon the cues obtained from the environment. CD80 (B7.1) and CD86 (B7.2) expressed by activated DCs are critically important for initiation of T-cell responses,²⁵ as well as the CD40/CD40L pathway that also participates in T-cell priming and differentiation;²⁶ thus, expression of these molecules is reflective of their state of maturation. While within T cells, the Naïve subset was predominant expressors of S1P₁, it is the activated DCs that had the most S1P₁ expression. This pattern is consistent with a potential role for S1P₁ on the migration of activated DC from LP to MLN, enabling critical encounters with Naïve T cells. Modulation of DC-T cell encounters represents an additional potential point of control for S1PR agonists in IBD.

In the gut, S1P₁ downregulation is required for the establishment of tissue residence, particularly of CD8 subsets.²¹ However, the clinical evidence suggests that there is also a

pathogenically relevant recirculating T-cell pool, as blockade of α 4 β 7-MAdCAM-1 interactions offers clear therapeutic benefit in IBD.^{1,2} Although the differences in S1P₁ expression on subsets of gut-homing molecule-expressing effectors (CD44⁺/CD62L^{neg}) within intestine were negligible, within the MLN, the majority of the CD4 with high surface expression of CCR9 and integrin β 7 also had the most total S1P₁, suggesting that these cells might be poised to recirculate. By contrast, within the CD8, those that exhibited high S1P₁ had the least surface gut-homing receptors. This might account for differences in the relative trafficking abilities of T cells, with the majority of effector CD4 but only a minority of CD8⁺ effectors being poised to recirculate.

The present study provides insight into the regulation of S1P₁ expression by inflammatory signals. On the one hand, chemical injury to the colonic mucosa, which induces an acute inflammatory response and is primarily mediated by innate immunity, did not affect S1P₁ expression on colonic T cells, despite the presence of severe acute inflammation. On the other hand, chronic inflammatory signals demonstrate a strong inductive effect on effector CD4⁺ T cell S1P₁ expression, following development of chronic colitis induced by transfer of Treg-depleted CD4⁺ T cells. However, this more representative model of human IBD still lacks the complexity of an intact immune system, as Rag^{-/-} mice are devoid of functional CD8 and B cells, even after CD4 reconstitution. TNFAARE mice bear a deletion of the AAU-rich region of the TNF gene and develop chronic Crohn's-like transmural ileitis and arthritis²⁷

Figure 6 Inflammation alters the expression of enzymes that regulate tissue sphingosine-1-phosphate receptor (S1P) levels. Analyses of mRNA expression of enzymes that control S1P levels (Sphk1, sphingosine kinase 1; Sphk2, sphingosine kinase 2; Sgpl1, sphingosine-1-phosphate lyase; SGPP1, sphingosine-1-phosphate phosphatase 1; SGPP2, sphingosine-1-phosphate phosphatase 2; Spns2, Spinster homolog 2) was performed by real-time qRT-PCR on intestinal tissues from mice and humans with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), compared with respective normal controls. (a) Patients with and without ulcerative colitis ($n = 8/\text{group}$), (b) Patients with and without Crohn's disease ($n = 8/\text{group}$), (c) Mice treated with dextran sulfate sodium (DSS) or vehicle (H_2O) ($n = 4/\text{group}$), (d) Mice with (CD45RB^{Hi}) or without (CD45RB^{Lo}) T-cell transfer colitis ($n = 4\text{--}6/\text{group}$), (e) Uninflamed AKR and SAMP1/YitFc with spontaneous ileitis ($n = 7/\text{group}$), and (f) Normal C57BL/6 and ileitic TNFΔARE ($n = 9/\text{group}$). Data are shown as mean $\pm$ s.e.m. * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$ by two-tailed t -test.

that lasts throughout the animal's lifetime. By crossing TNFΔARE mice with S1P₁-eGFP mice, we were able to comprehensively assess S1P₁ expression on relevant intestinal immune cell subsets.^{9,28} We observed increased T-cell recruitment into the ileal LP and MLN of TNFΔARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice and S1P₁ expression increased on several CD4⁺ and CD8⁺ subsets within inflamed ilea and most T-cell subsets isolated from MLN. S1P₁ was similarly upregulated on DC isolated from ilea, MLN, and spleen of inflamed mice and S1P₁-expressing microvessels were abundant in inflamed ilea of TNFΔARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice, particularly in the region of postcapillary venules. The role of S1P on vascular integrity is well known, and genetic deletion of S1P₁ results in colonic vascular fragility.^{29,30} It is conceivable that administration of S1PR agonists may exert functional effects at the level of the postcapillary venules, such as tightening the barrier or downregulating endothelial integrin

ligands (e.g., MAdCAM-1 and VCAM-1). Indeed, most effective IBD therapies are known to act through more than a single mechanism.

Further control of the S1P system takes place at the level of enzymatic regulation of its tissue concentration. Once again, chronic inflammatory signals appear to be important determinants, as we observed an almost uniform pattern of expression in both preclinical models and patients with IBD. Different from the effects on S1P₁ expression, enzyme dysregulation was observed even during acute colitis. In particular, the inducible sphingosine kinase-1 (Sphk1) and the intra- to extracellular S1P transporter, Spinster homolog 2 (Spns2) were upregulated, whereas the degrading enzymes (S1P lyase1: sgpl1 and phosphatases: sgpp1, 2) were downregulated. Cyster and colleagues had shown that just reducing lyase activity increased tissue S1P levels; thus, this expression

Figure 7 FTY720 reduced velocity of mesenteric lymph node (MLN) lymphocytes, depleted Naïve and central memory T cells from circulation and downregulated sphingosine-1-phosphate receptor-1 (S1P₁) expression on T, B, and endothelial cells in mice with chronic ileitis. **(a)** Sorted T cells from DsRed mice were transferred into TNFΔARE mice. Sixteen hours later, the effect of FTY720-P on cell behavior was analyzed via intravital microscopy in MLN explants. Cell tracks from point of origin illustrate directional movement after FTY720-P or vehicle. Analyses show the effect of FTY720-P on cell velocity (data from three experiments, s.d., **** $P < 0.0001$). **(b)** Percentage of circulating Naïve, effector, and central memory T cells in blood of TNFΔARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice treated with FTY720 (3 mg kg⁻¹) or vehicle for 6 weeks. **(c)** S1P₁ expression (median fluorescent intensity, MFI) of CD4⁺ T cells, CD8⁺ T cells, and B cells (B220⁺) from blood, endothelial cells (CD45⁻ CD31⁺) isolated from ileal lamina propria (LP) of TNFΔARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice treated with FTY720 (3 mg kg⁻¹) or vehicle for 6 weeks. (Data from three independent experiments, $n = 5$, * $P < 0.05$, ** $P < 0.01$, *** $P < 0.001$ by two-tailed t -test.)

pattern likely results in alterations of the tissue to blood S1P gradient,⁷ which may promote lymphocyte retention within inflamed tissues. As expected, FTY720 induced marked lymphopenia and induced S1P₁ degradation on lymphocytes and EC, predominantly altered the percentage of Naïve and CM CD4⁺ and CD8⁺ T cells, while unexpectedly increasing the percentage of effector T cells in peripheral blood. We speculate that functional antagonists such as

FTY720 and ozanimod that induce S1P₁ degradation may therefore promote escape from S1P-mediated retention and mobilization of critical gut-homing CD4⁺ effectors. Once in circulation the lack of survival signals may result in apoptosis of pathogenic gut-homing T cells and decreased inflammation.

FTY720 sequesters lymphocytes within lymph nodes, presumably preventing them from reaching sites of

inflammation in immune-mediated diseases.^{11,12} Previous studies had shown that FTY720 prevented inflammation in the DSS-induced and the CD4⁺CD62L⁺ T-cell transfer model of colitis.³¹ It also ameliorated IL-10^{-/-},³² CD45RB^{hi},³³ and oxazolone colitis³⁴ but not TNBS-induced colitis.³⁵ An antibody against S1P₁ prevented T-cell chemotaxis toward S1P³⁶ arguing for the popular T-cell centric mechanism of action of S1PR agonists.

Although ozanimod's selectivity for S1P₁ may be advantageous over FTY720, a previous trial of another S1P₁-selective agonist (KRP-203) was discontinued early due to a lack of clinical response in UC (www.novctrd.com). KRP-203 had previously shown to attenuate chronic colitis in IL-10-deficient mice,³⁷ a model considered to be representative of human UC. It is tempting to speculate that this might be due to inherent differences in the compound's pharmacological properties or due to small sample size or premature assessment of trial end points. The anti-inflammatory effects of all anti-trafficking strategies improve with time, perhaps due to the long lives of effector lymphocytes, while most clinical trial end points continue to be assessed between 6 and 8 weeks, likely based on our experience with TNF inhibitors.

In conclusion, based on the expression of S1P₁ and the functional effects of S1PR agonists on lymphocytes, DC, and endothelium we envision a tripartite mechanism of action for these family of drugs. Such mechanism may combine the retention of Naïve T cells at secondary lymphoid organs with the mobilization of effector T cells from intestine and subsets of activated DC to inductive sites, as well as the modification of endothelial barrier function, with a resultant net effect of attenuation of intestinal inflammation.

METHODS

Mice. Edg-1^{eGFP/eGFP} mice, hereafter referred to as S1P₁-eGFP mice, developed as described¹⁷ were used as controls and for the induction of acute colitis by DSS. Rag1^{-/-} mice (B6.129S7-Rag1^{tm1Mom/J}) and DsRed mice (005441; 00Tg(CAG-DsRed*MST) 1Nagy) were purchased from Jackson (Bar Harbor, ME). The B6.129S-Tnf^{tm2Gkl/J} (TNFΔARE) strain was previously described.^{27,38} TNFΔARE mice were crossed with S1P₁-eGFP^{+/+} transgenic mice¹⁷ to generate TNFΔARE Δ^{ARE/+}/S1P₁-eGFP^{+/+} mice. Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUC) of the University of California San Diego and The Scripps Research Institute approved all the animal procedures.

Tissue fixation, paraffin embedding, and histological scoring. Tissues were prepared as described and severity of inflammation assessed in a blinded manner by a pathologist (Paul Jedlicka).^{39,40}

Cell isolation. Spleen, MLN, and LP mononuclear cells were isolated as previously described.⁹

Flow cytometry. Cells from indicated compartments were suspended in 1 × phosphate-buffered saline (PBS) with 2% fetal bovine serum, supplemented with Fc block and stained with anti-mouse antibodies against S1P₁ (713412) (R&D Systems, Minneapolis, MN); CD4 (RM4-5), CD62L (MEL-14), CD44 (IM7), CD11b (M1/70), CD31 (MEC13.3), CD80 (16-10A1), CD40 (3/23), β7 (FIB504), CD45RB (C363-16A) (Biolegend, San Diego, CA); CD8 (53-6.7), B220 (RA3-6B2), CD45 (3-F11), MHCII (M5/114.15.2), CD11c (N418), CD86 (GL1), CD103 (2E7), CCR9 (eBioCW-1.2) (eBioscience,

San Diego, CA) or the corresponding isotype controls. Cells were washed twice and fixed in BD stabilizing fixative (BD Biosciences, San Jose, CA). Flow-cytometry analyses were performed using a Cytex DXP8 (Cytex, Fremont, CA). Data were analyzed using the FLOWJO software (Tree Star, Ashland, OR).

RNA extraction, cDNA synthesis, and real-time PCR. Total RNA was isolated using RNeasy Kit (Qiagen, Valencia, CA). RNA (500 ng) was reverse-transcribed with a high-capacity cDNA archive kit (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA). Real-time qRT-PCR assays for SPHK1 (Hs00184211_m1), SPHK2 (Hs00219999_m1), SGPL1 (Hs00393700_m1), SGPP1 (Hs00229266_m1), SGPP2 (Hs00544786_m1), SPNS2 (Hs01390449_g1), Sphk1 (Mm00448841_g1), Sphk2 (Mm00445021_m1), Sgpl1 (Mm00486079_m1), Sgpp1 (Mm00473016_m1), Sgpp2 (Mm01158866_m1), and Spns2 (Mm01249324_m1) were performed using TaqMan Universal Master Mix (Applied Biosystems) with GAPDH/gapdh as endogenous controls. Relative gene expression was calculated using the comparative C_T(ΔΔC_T) quantitation method with Applied BioSystems StepOne Software v2.3.

Immunohistochemistry and imaging. Tissues were fixed in Z-fix (Anatech, Battle Creek, MI) and placed into 30% sucrose/PBS for 48 h at 4 °C. Five to seven μm OCT frozen sections were permeabilized, blocked in 5% normal goat serum-PBST, washed, and incubated overnight at 4 °C with anti-GFP (Abcam, Cambridge, MA, ab6556) primary at 1:100 diluted in PBST-1% normal goat serum. Sections were washed and incubated with secondary (Life Technologies, Waltham, MA; 1:1,000) and DAPI nuclear stain (Life Technologies, 1:10,000) before mounting on Vectashield (Vector Laboratories). Images were obtained using an Olympus BX51 microscope with the MetaMorph (Molecular Devices, Sunnyvale, CA) software.

Inflamed and normal ilea of TNFΔARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice and S1P₁-eGFP controls were imaged. Freshly prepared ileal sections were adhered (VetBond, 3M, St. Paul, MN) to a reservoir of 95% O₂/5% CO₂ superfused RPMI and were imaged by two-photon microscopy as reported.^{41,42} Image volumes of 600 μm × 600 μm × 150 μm were obtained with a Leica SP5 confocal microscope (Buffalo Grove, IL) and processed with Imaris (Bitplane, Zurich, Switzerland).

Induction of acute colitis by DSS. Ten-week-old S1P₁-eGFP mice received 3% DSS in the drinking water for 7 days. Weight loss was monitored daily and tissues were collected at day 7.

Two-photon intravital microscopy. Cells were isolated from lymph nodes and spleen of DsRed mice, sorted using Dynabeads Mouse Pan T (11443D, ThermoScientific, Waltham, MA) according to the manufacturer's protocol and injected (5 × 10⁶ T cells) retro-orbitally. Cell behavior was analyzed 16 h later in MLN explants by two-photon microscopy as reported,^{41,42} before and after FTY720-P.

FTY720 treatment studies. FTY720 (3 mg kg⁻¹) or vehicle (control) was administered intraperitoneally to 10- to 12-week-old TNFΔARE/S1P₁-eGFP mice every other day for 6 weeks.

CD45RB^{hi} adoptive transfer colitis studies. CD4⁺ splenocytes from S1P₁-eGFP mice were enriched using magnetic beads (Miltenyi Biotec, San Diego, CA), according to the manufacturer's protocol. CD4⁺CD45RB^{hi}/CD25^{neg} cells and CD4⁺CD45RB^{lo} cells were FACS-sorted and 2 × 10⁵ CD4⁺CD45RB^{hi} cells transferred into 8-week-old Rag1^{-/-} mice. Control mice additionally received 1 × 10⁵ CD4⁺CD45RB^{lo} cells. Tissues were harvested once the colitic group lost 10% of their initial body weight.

Statistical analysis. Results are expressed as mean ± s.e.m. unless otherwise indicated. Data were analyzed using GraphPad Prism 5 (GraphPad Software, La Jolla, CA). Significant differences between individual groups were calculated using two-tailed unpaired *t*-test.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL is linked to the online version of the paper at <http://www.nature.com/mi>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is funded by grants from the National Institutes of Health (DK108670), BLRD VA Merit Review award (5I01BX001051) to J.R.-N. and by a research contract from Receptos.

DISCLOSURE

R.P. and F.S. were employed by Receptos. J.R.-N. received a research contract from Receptos.

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