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Research paper

Microvesicles released from *Giardia intestinalis* disturb host-pathogen response *in vitro*

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ABSTRACT

Giardia intestinalis (G.I), is an anaerobic protozoan and the aetiological agent of giardiasis, a diarrhoea present worldwide and associated with poverty. G.I has a simple life cycle alternating between cyst and trophozoite. Cysts are transmitted orally to the stomach and transform to trophozoites in the intestine by a multifactorial process. Recently, microvesicles (MVs) have been found to be released from a wide range of eukaryotic cells. We have observed a release of MVs during the life cycle of G.I., identifying MVs from active trophozoites and from trophozoites differentiating to the cyst form. The aim of the current work was to investigate the role of MVs from G.I in the pathogenesis of giardiasis. MVs from log phase were able to increase the attachment of *G. intestinalis* trophozoites to Caco-2 cells. Moreover, MVs from *G. intestinalis* could be captured by human immature dendritic cells, resulting in increased activation and allostimulation of human dendritic cells. Lipid rafts participate in the MV biogenesis and in the attachment to Caco-2 cells. Nevertheless, proteomic analysis from two types of MVs has shown slight differences at the protein levels. An understanding of biogenesis and content of MVs derived from trophozoites might have important implications in the pathogenesis of the disease.

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1. Introduction

Cell-cell communication is mediated by secreted biomolecules, including peptides, proteins, lipids and nucleic acids. These molecules are also present in extracellular vesicles (EVs: mainly exosomes and microvesicles), which are released from different cell types and are able to bind to receptors on target cells, triggering intracellular signalling that modifies the physiological state of the target cells (Ratajczak et al., 2006).

EVs are found at elevated levels in cancer and in different acute and chronic inflammatory diseases including sepsis, stroke, atherosclerosis and diabetes mellitus (reviewed in Lower et al., 2014; Aurelian et al., 2014). They are also found in physiological processes such as coagulation (Julich et al., 2014).

Recently, many authors have described the involvement of EVs during the parasite-host interaction. These authors have shown the presence of EVs of different sizes carrying microRNAs, proteins and pro-inflammatory cytokines modulating the host cell (Marcilla et al., 2014; Evans-Osses et al., 2015; Barteneva et al., 2013)

As the leading cause for protozoal diarrhoea worldwide, the intestinal parasite *Giardia intestinalis* (Syn *G. duodenalis*, *G. lamblia*) is an important pathogen of humans and animals causing morbidity and adversely affecting economies. *Giardia* has a peculiar biology and represents an interesting biological model to under-

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stand evolution, organelle function, and antigenic variation (Adam, 2001).

Giardia intestinalis has two evolutionary stages, the trophozoite, which is located in the gut of animals and humans and which multiplies by binary fission, and the infectious stage, the cyst, released into the environment in faeces.

Giardia belongs to the phylum Diplomonadida, unicellular eukaryotes that have undergone considerable reductive evolution. The lateral gene transfer (LGT) mechanism, an important evolutionary step in prokaryotes, has been shown in *Giardia*, supporting this parasite to be included in an early branch of eukaryotic evolution (Embley and Hirt, 1998). These findings provide insights into the evolution of biochemical pathways in early eukaryote evolution, and could be important in understanding the minimization, or even loss, of most cellular systems such as mitochondria, peroxisomes, Golgi apparatus, and a classical endo-lysosomal system.

Pathological cysts are ingested via the oral route and symptoms usually occur after an incubation period of 1–2 weeks, although half of *Giardia* infections are asymptomatic. After emergence from cysts, the flagellated *G. lamblia* trophozoites colonize mainly the upper small intestine. Trophozoites reside and replicate in the intestinal lumen and at intestinal epithelial cells, but are not able to invade the mucosa. Although still poorly understood, it is clear that the attachment of the parasite to the mucosal surface is the critical point for its persistence in the host. The parasite contains a ventral disk that seems to be important for attachment (Woessner and Dawson, 2012), while the flagella contributes to correct positioning and orientation of the trophozoites before the attachment (House et al., 2011). The parasite actively engages mucosal immunity and the infection progresses with a low or absent inflammation in most cases (Oberhuber and Stolte, 1997). Most likely, mechanical effects, or some other, as yet not described mechanism, produces villus and brush border microvillus atrophy, leading to digestive enzyme deficiencies (Solaymani-Mohammadi and Singer, 2011), and chronic giardiasis can lead to mucosal inflammation with pronounced villus loss (Hanevik et al., 2007); protease activities may be a direct cause of diarrhoeas in giardiasis. Moreover, Jiménez et al. (2004) found that excretory and secretory antigens (E/S Ags) from *G. lamblia* induced an intestinal pathogenesis, which coincided with mucosal inflammation in BALB/c mice. Oral administration of the E/S Ags not only stimulated production of antibodies with parasitocidal activity, but also resulted in histological alterations within the intestinal tissue that were comparable to those observed in natural and experimental *Giardia* infections (Jiménez et al., 2014). After colonization the cyst formation represents a key step in the life cycle of the parasite. This process involves cellular and molecular events. Luján et al. (1996) reported that cholesterol starvation induces encystation.

Three encystation-specific cyst wall proteins (CWP1, 2 and 3) are expressed and concentrated in encystation-specific vesicles (ESVs) that circulate within the parasite before being transported to the cyst wall (Luján et al., 1996; Reiner et al., 1990; Lauwaet et al., 2007; Faso and Hehl, 2011; Benchimol and De Souza, 2011). Synthesis of ESVs starts 4–6 h after encystation is induced and is completed with the cyst formation by approximately 24 h (Reiner et al., 1990). Interestingly, the protozoan could be able to release other kinds of vesicles that could be speculated to be associated with the attachment to the intestinal cells and pathogenesis. In preliminary work (Deolindo et al., 2013) we have shown that *G. intestinalis* may release MVs when exposed to different pHs and inducers. Now, We have continued an in depth analysis of MV biogenesis and of the phenotype of the extracellular vesicles released by the parasite.

We have hypothesized in this work that the response of *Giardia intestinalis* to environmental stress conditions results in the active

release of MVs from the plasma membrane that modulate the host-parasite cell interaction.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Cell culture

A human colonic adenocarcinoma cell line, Caco-2 cell clone C2BBE1 [30], was obtained from the American Type Culture Collection (CRL-2102). Caco-2 cells (passages 57–72) were cultured at 37 °C, 5% CO₂ in Dulbecco's Modified Eagle's medium (DMEM; Cellgro, Manassas, VA) supplemented with 10% foetal bovine serum (FBS) (Life Technologies, Grand Island, NY), 100 U/ml penicillin, and 100 mg/ml streptomycin. Cells were fed every third day and passaged using 0.025% trypsin with 0.22 mM EDTA when 80–90% confluent.

2.2. Parasite culture and in vitro encystation

Giardia lamblia strain WB clone C6 was obtained from the American Type Culture Collection (#50803). Parasites were grown in filter sterilized modified TYI-S-33 medium with 10% adult bovine serum and 0.05% bovine bile at 37 °C in microaerophilic conditions and subcultured when confluent. To collect parasites for experiments, the medium was removed from the culture to eliminate unattached or dead parasites. The tube was refilled with cold, sterile medium and trophozoites detached by chilling on ice for 15 min. Parasites were collected by centrifugation (1500 × g for 5 min at 4 °C) and washed once with the plating medium of 90% complete DMEM/10% *Giardia* medium. Parasites were then counted using a hemocytometer, and diluted to the appropriate number.

Encystation was induced as described previously (McCaffery and Gillin, 1994). Briefly, the pre-encysting cultures were grown to late log phase for 48 h in TYI-S-33 medium (pH 7.1) without antibiotics. Encystation was initiated by removing the spent medium and non-adherent cells and re-nourishing the adherent cells with an encystation medium (TYI-S-33 medium adjusted to pH 7.8 and supplemented with 0.25 mg/ml bovine bile and 5 mM lactic acid).

2.2.1. Inhibition of lipid rafts

Trophozoites from *G. intestinalis* stationary phase were decanted, washed and resuspended in TYI-S-33 medium without FBS. The parasites were incubated with 2.5, 5.0 and 10 μM de MβCD for 1 h at 37C. After this time the parasites were centrifugated at 1000 × g for 10 min and the pellet resuspended with fresh TYI-S-33 medium and used in microvesiculation and adhesion essays.

2.2.2. Adhesion assay

The assay was carried out with stationary phase cultures of *G. Intestinalis* trophozoites or with *G. intestinalis* trophozoites treated with MβCD (10 μm). The parasites were decanted by chilling for 10 min in ice-cold PBS, at pH 7.2. Trophozoite suspensions were centrifuged at 1000 × g for 10 min and resuspended to a concentration of 1 × 10⁶/ml. Caco cells were seeded on a coverslip in a concentration of 1 × 10⁵ cells/well. Suspensions of trophozoites were then co-incubated with cultured cells in a 10:1 ratio. Plates were incubated at 37 °C in 10% CO₂. After incubating for 1–3 h, unattached trophozoites were counted in a haemocytometer and the% adhered cells determined. The effect of vesicles was tested in the same experiments incubated with different concentrations of purified MVs.

2.3. Monocyte isolation

Cells were obtained from leukocyte residues of healthy donors from the Blood and Tissue Bank (Barcelona, Spain). Peripheral blood

mononuclear cells (PBMcs) were isolated by density gradient centrifugation using Ficoll-Paque (GE Healthcare, Sweden) and T cells (CD3+) were depleted using the RosetteSep Human CD3 Depletion Cocktail (StemCell Technologies, Seattle, USA). PBMcs depleted of T cells were washed twice with washing buffer (400 × g, 5 min, RT) and were counted using PerfectCount Microspheres (Cytognos, Salamanca, Spain).

Monocytes were then obtained by positive magnetic selection using the Easysep Human anti-CD14 Positive Selection Kit (Stemcell Technologies, France) following the manufacturer's instructions. Monocytes were >95% CD14+ and viable (as determined by 7-AAD staining).

2.4. Differentiation to iDCs

Monocyte-derived dendritic cells (MDDCs) were generated by culturing monocytes with the differentiation cytokines IL4 and GM-CSF for 6 days. Subsequently, isolated monocytes were cultured at 1×10^6 cells/ml in complete medium composed of RPMI 1640 (PAA, Pasching, Austria) supplemented with 5% (v/v) heat-inactivated human serum AB (BioWhittaker, Lonza), 2 mM L-glutamine (Sigma Aldrich, USA), 100 U/ml penicillin (Cepa, Spain) and 100 U/ml streptomycin (Normon Laboratories, Spain), with recombinant human IL-4 and GM-CSF (Miltenyi Biotec), both at a final concentration of 1000 U/ml. After six days, immature dendritic cells (iDCs) were harvested by collecting all media and incubating adhered cells with accutase (PAA, Pasching, Austria) for 30 min at 37 °C. iDCs were then washed with PBS (400 × g, 5 min), counted and used for indicated experiments.

2.5. Generation of MVs

Plasma Membrane Vesicles (MV) were produced from the *G. intestinalis* trophozoite. Parasites were grown in TYI-S-33 medium with 10% adult bovine serum and 0.05% bovine bile at 37 °C in microaerophilic conditions and subcultured when confluent. To collect parasites for experiments, the medium was removed from the culture to eliminate unattached or dead parasites. The tube was refilled with cold, sterile medium and trophozoites detached by chilling on ice for 15 min. Parasites were collected by centrifugation (1500 × g for 5 min at 4 °C) and were then counted using a hemocytometer, and diluted to 1×10^6 cells/ml. The parasites were incubated in 1 ml serum-free culture medium (Yi-S) and stimulated with 1 mM CaCl₂ for 1 h at 37 °C. This way, MV production was stimulated so it prevailed over exosome release, and thus an enriched MVs-containing medium was obtained. After incubation, all medium was collected, centrifuged at 2500 × g for 5 min and the supernatant was further centrifuged twice at 4000 × g for 30 min. Afterwards, supernatant was ultracentrifuged at 100,000 × g for 1 h 30 min and the pellets, containing concentrated MVs, were collected. MVs were suspended in PBS and were approximately quantified according to their protein content (Bradford assay). Finally, MVs suspensions were dried using speed vacuuming for storage and shipping. Dried MVs were resuspended in PBS and kept at 4 °C until further use.

2.6. Flow cytometry

MVs were quantified by counting in a BD FACScalibur™ Flow Cytometer (Becton, Dickinson and Company) using dot plots with SSC and FSC in log scale. Quantification of MVs by FACS analysis was further validated by protein quantification with the Bradford assay.

For surface phosphatidylserine detection MVs were resuspended in 200 μl of annexin-binding buffer (ABB – HEPES 10 mM, NaCl 140 mM, CaCl₂ 2.5 mM, pH 7.2) and incubated with 25 μg/ml

AnnexinV-FITC (Sigma-Aldrich) for 30 min at room temperature. MVs were diluted in 5 ml of ABB and centrifuged at 100,000 × g during 90 min. The MV pellet was resuspended in 500 μl of ABB and data were collected in a flow cytometer (FACScalibur, BD Biosciences).

2.7. MV staining

MVs were stained with the lipophilic dye PKH-67 (Sigma Aldrich, USA) for capture assays. 6 μl of PKH-67 was diluted in 1 ml of diluent C and MVs were also diluted 1/40 in diluent C. Both dilutions were mixed together at a volume ratio of 1:1, and labelling was continued for 15 min at room temperature in the dark. The reaction was stopped by adding 2 ml EV-free FBS (>16 h at 100,000 × g), and MVs were then washed in PBS, and ultracentrifuged at 100,000 × g for 1 h 10 min (SW28 rotor, Optima™ XL-100K Ultracentrifuge, Beckman).

2.8. NanoSight analysis

EVs were resuspended in 100 μl of PBS, 50 μl of which was diluted 1:10 with 450 μl of PBS, and analysed using NanoSight LM10 equipment and NTA software version 2.3 (NanoSight Ltd., Malvern, UK). Images were recorded for 60 s (5 technical replicates) with the following parameters: camera shutter – 1492, camera gain – 512, detection threshold – 10.

2.9. MVs capture assay

To assess the ability of iDCs to capture MVs, 10⁵ iDCs were incubated at 37 °C in 5% CO₂ with PKH-67 labelled MVs (25 μg or 12.5 μg) at a final volume of 150 μl complete medium. As a control, iDCs were incubated at 4 °C. Several incubation times were assessed in the different experiments.

After incubation, cells were extensively washed in cold PBS. At this point, they were either stained for capture and phenotype analysis by flow cytometry or left in complete medium at 37 °C for a further 24 h. After culture, cells were assessed for expression of both activation markers and for allostimulation capabilities. For phenotype analysis, the following murine mAbs were used (BD Biosciences) CD83-APC, HLA-DR-APC-H7, CD25-PE and CD25-PE-Cy5. Isotype-matched mAbs were used as controls. All analysis was performed in a FACS Canto II flow cytometer (BD Biosciences) and analysed using FlowJo software. For inhibition experiments, cells were treated for 30 min at 37 °C with cytochalasin D (Calbiochem, Germany) at the indicated concentrations prior to the addition of MVs.

2.10. Allostimulation assay

Allostimulation assays were performed by culturing together 1h-MV pulsed, 24h-resting MDDCs with allogeneic CFSE-labelled T cells. T cells were isolated from healthy donors' PBMcs by negative magnetic selection using the Easysep Human T cell Enrichment Kit (Stemcell Technologies), and stained with CFSE (0.4 μM; Invitrogen).

iDCs were co-cultured with T cells at different ratios, from 1:20 (5000 MDDCs: 100,000 T cells) to 1:160 (625 MDDCs: 100,000 T cells). As a positive control, T cells were stimulated with Phorbol 12-Myristate 13-Acetate (PMA, 0.6 ng/ml, Sigma Aldrich) and Ionomycin calcium salt (200 ng/ml, Sigma Aldrich).

After 4.5 days of culture, proliferation was assessed by flow cytometry (LSR Fortessa Analyzer, BD). Proliferative T cells were gated by diluted CFSE intensity.

2.11. Cytotoxicity (viability) tests

Cell viability assays were performed according to Woodhead et al. (2000). Cells were inoculated in 96-multiwell plates (Costar, Corning, NY, USA) at a cell density of 1.2×10^5 cells/well. At confluence, cells were incubated with serially diluted DSS for pre-determined time periods. DSS was dissolved in culture media and filter-sterilized using a $0.45 \mu\text{m}$ filter. Viability was assayed by a commercially available kit (Cell Titer 96™ AQueous, Promega, Madison, USA), which depends on the physiologic reduction of MTS to formazan. Analyses were performed in triplicate.

2.12. Confocal microscopy assays

To corroborate MV capture and examine the distribution of MVs in pulsed iDCs, 10^5 iDCs were incubated with PKH-67-labelled MVs from *Giardia intestinalis* at 37°C for the indicated periods. Then, cells were extensively washed, stained for CD11c-PE (ImmunoTools), and fixed with 2% formaldehyde solution. Fixed cells were mounted in Immunofluorescence slides with ProLong® Gold Antifade Reagent with DAPI (Life Technologies), and were examined in an Axio-Observer Z1 inverted fluorescent Microscope (ZEISS, Germany).

To determine the endocytosis trafficking, MVs-pulsed iDCs were stained for the Early Endosome Antigen (EEA-1; BD Transduction Laboratories) and Transferrin Receptor (TfR; Abcam, UK), followed by Alexa546-anti mouse IgG and anti rabbit IgG, respectively. Labelling was performed with the IntraStain fixative and permeabilization kit (Dako, Denmark). Finally, cells were cytospun onto glass slides and mounted with ProLong® Gold Antifade Reagent with DAPI. Confocal microscopy was performed on an Axio-Observer Z1 microscope with the LSM 70 confocal module (ZEISS, Germany).

2.13. Proteomic assays

Samples were digested with sequencing grade trypsin ($2.5 \text{ ng}/\mu\text{L}$; Promega) as described elsewhere (Shevchenko et al., 1996). The digestion mixture was dried in a vacuum centrifuge, resuspended in $50 \mu\text{l}$ of 2% ACN, 0.1% TFA. $1 \mu\text{l}$ of each digested mixture were loaded onto a trap column (NanoLC Column, $3 \mu\text{m}$ C18CL, $100 \mu\text{m} \times 15 \text{ cm}$; Nikkyo), and desalted with 0.1% TFA at $2 \mu\text{l}/\text{min}$ during 10 min. The peptides were loaded onto an analytical column (LC Column, $3 \mu\text{m}$ C18CL, $75 \mu\text{m} \times 12 \text{ cm}$, Nikkyo) equilibrated in 5% acetonitrile 0.1% FA (formic acid). Peptide elution was carried out with a linear gradient of 5–35% buffer B in 120 min (A: 0.1% FA; B: ACN, 0.1% FA) at a flow rate of $300 \text{ nl}/\text{min}$. Peptides were analysed in a mass spectrometer nanoESI qTOF (5600 TripleTOF, ABSCIEX). The tripleTOF was operated in information dependent acquisition mode, in which a 0.25 s TOF-MS scan from 350 to $1250 m/z$, was performed, followed by 0.05 s product ion scans from 100 to $1500 m/z$ on the 50 most intense 25 charged ions. The MS/MS information (combined from three runs of one sample) was sent to MASCOT v2.3.02 or to PARAGON via the Protein Pilot 4.5 (ABSciex).

MASCOT search engine (Matrix Science). Database search was performed on NCBI *Giardia* EST. Searches were performed with tryptic specificity allowing one missed cleavage and a tolerance on the mass measurement of 50 ppm in MS mode and 0.6 Da for MS/MS ions. Carbamidomethylation of Cys was used as a fixed modification and oxidation of Met, and deamidation of Asn and Gln as variable modifications.

ProteinPilot v4.5. search engine (ABSciex). ProteinPilot default parameters were used to generate peak list directly from 5600 TripleTof.wiff files. The Paragon algorithm of ProteinPilot was used to search the NCBI protein database with the following parameters: trypsin specificity, cys alkylation, no taxonomy restriction, and

the search effort set to through. To avoid using the same spectral evidence in more than one protein, the identified proteins were grouped based on MS/MS spectra by the Protein pilot Progroup algorithm. Thus, proteins sharing MS/MS spectra are grouped, regardless of the peptide sequence assigned. The protein within each group that can explain more spectral data with confidence is shown as the primary protein of the group. Only the proteins of the group for which there is individual evidence (unique peptides with enough confidence) are also listed, usually toward the end of the protein list.

3. Results

3.1. Trophozoites from *Giardia intestinalis* release extracellular vesicles (MVs) from the plasma membrane under different environmental conditions

To simulate the dramatic environmental changes during the cell cycle of *Giardia intestinalis*, we compared the growth curve of trophozoites cultured *in vitro* for 48 h under different pHs ranging from 5 to 8. A poor growth was obtained at pH 8.0, and the best condition was at pH 7.0. Curiously, the parasite was able to grow at acidic pHs (pH 5.0 and 6.0), and the growth was highly inhibited at pH 8.0., a condition in which trophozoites are differentiated to cyst when the parasites are in the presence of inducers such as bile, (Fig. 1A). Due to these growth curve differences, we next analysed whether the trophozoites could release MVs in response to different environmental conditions (Fig. 1B). We saw a high release of MVs at 24 h at pH 7.0, and no differences were found at different pHs after 48 h (Fig. 1C).

We also analysed the production of MVs during the first 3 h in a serum-free medium with added calcium, a well-known microvesicle inducer, and we detected an increase of MV release between 30 to 120 min, maintaining the release up to 180 min (Fig. 1D). On this basis, we decided to perform an experiment of MV induction for 60 min only.

To characterize the type of MVs released by the trophozoite forms of *Giardia intestinalis*, we analysed the supernatant of trophozoites of cultured in a fetal bovine serum-free medium for 60 min in the presence of 1 mM of calcium, and subjected to different rounds of centrifugation and final ultracentrifugation. Examination of the preparation by electron microscopy revealed cup-shaped vesicles of 60–150 nm (Not shown). MVs were also quantified by FACS and analysed for size and granularity and the presence of phosphatidylserine by detecting annexin V-FITC staining (Supplementary Fig. S1). We verified the impact of calcium on MV release using higher concentrations of calcium, as well as EGTA (calcium chelating inhibitor), and a calcium ionophore, an activator of calcium release, as shown in Fig. 1E.

To determine vesicle size variation in the population of extracellular vesicles, we used nanoparticle tracking analysis (Nanosight, Costa Mesa, CA) to directly examine millions of vesicles. This analysis showed a peak with a mean diameter of 201.6 nm and that more than 50% were between 150 and 350 nm in diameter (Fig. 1F)

3.2. The origin of microvesicles is plasma membrane and lipid raft dependent

Due to the size of MVs and presence of phosphatidylserine at the surface, we were interested to verify plasma membrane and lipid raft (also named DRMs (detergent-resistant membranes)) involvement in the biogenesis of *G. intestinalis* MVs. We investigated whether the disruption of lipid rafts from trophozoite plasma membranes affected MV formation, as it was defined previously (Del Conde et al., 2005). To assess this effect, we treated trophozoite

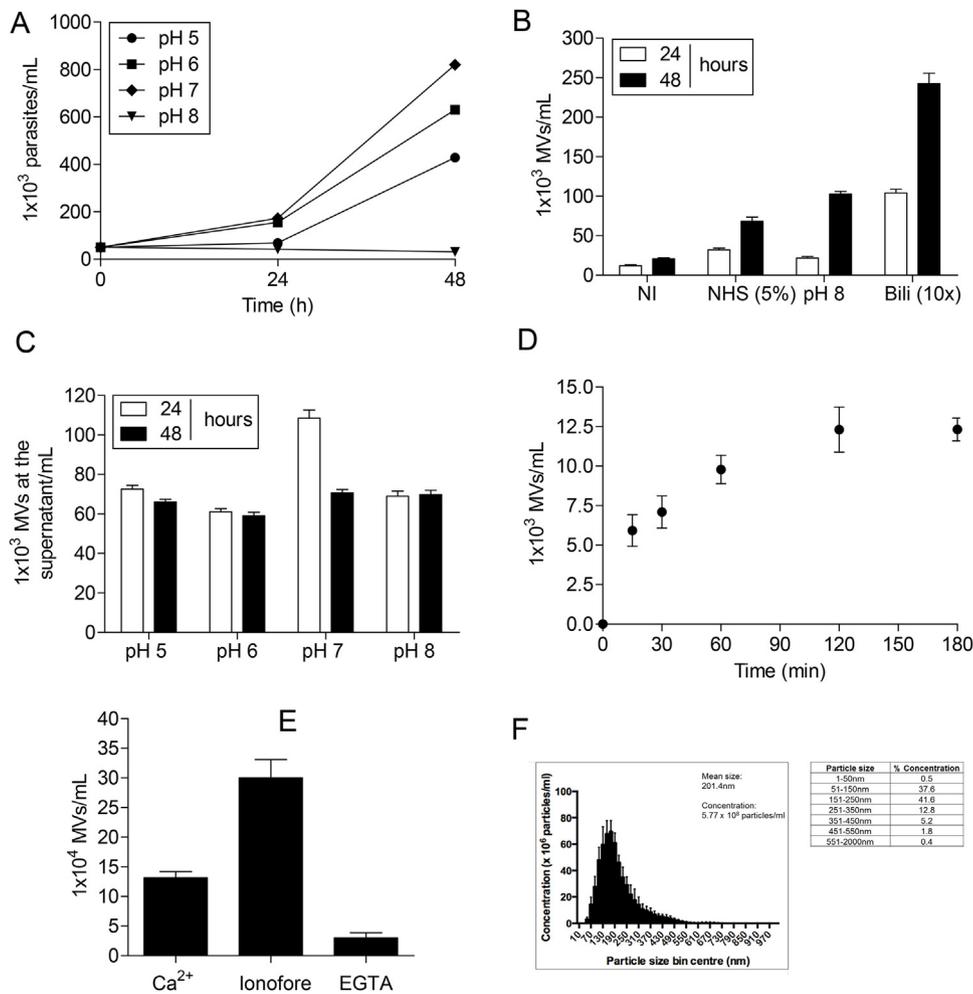


Fig. 1. Stress factors in the gastric environment affect growth of *G. intestinalis* trophozoites and their production of MVs: A) Growth at different pH values. An initial inoculum containing 5×10^4 parasites/ml was cultured at 37 °C for 24 or 48 h in media at different pH values. Subsequently, parasites were quantified using a Neubauer chamber. Results are representative of two independent experiments. B) MV production with different inducers. Trophozoites were induced to release MVs in different conditions, the supernatant then being ultracentrifuged, and MV production quantified by flow cytometry. The chart is representative of measurements made in triplicate, and the results represent the mean \pm standard error of three independent experiments. C) Effect of pH on MV production by *G. intestinalis* trophozoites. MVs were induced in the presence of CaCl_2 and their release was monitored at 24 and 48 h time points. EMVs contained in the supernatant were quantified by flow cytometry. The results are representative of measurements made in triplicate \pm standard error of three independent experiments. D) Early kinetics of MV production by trophozoites of *G. intestinalis* at pH 7.0 MVs induction was performed with CaCl_2 at pH 7 from 0 to 180 min, and the analysis of the release was performed after different incubation times. MVs contained in the supernatant were quantified by flow cytometry. The chart is representative of measurements made in triplicate, and the results represent the mean \pm standard error of three independent experiments. E) MV production from *G. intestinalis* trophozoites upon treatment with 1 mM CaCl_2 , 3 μM Calcium ionophore A23187 and 5 mM EGTA. F) Nanosight trace of purified vesicles. A mean diameter of 201.4 nm was measured. And at the upper a Table from Nanosight analysis of percentage of purified vesicles in various size ranges. The bar graph represents the mean \pm standard error of three independent experiments.

forms with M β CD (methyl- β -cyclodextrin) at different concentrations, and we saw a dose-dependent inhibition of MV formation from 25 to 60% with increasing M β CD (2.5 μM –10 μM), showing that the depletion of membrane cholesterol decreases EMV formation (Fig. 2A).

The inhibition of MV formation by removal of cholesterol suggests that trophozoites of *G. intestinalis* may diminish the parasite's ability to attach to host cell. We next performed the adhesion assay using trophozoites either non-treated or treated with 2.5–10 μM of M β CD, and we detected a dose-dependent inhibition of the attachment of *G. intestinalis* to host cells (Fig. 2B).

The importance of lipid raft structure and MV release in the attachment to the host cell was notably verified when *G. intestinalis* treated with 5 μM of M β CD was used in an adhesion assay for 3 h in the presence of MVs. We saw that the parasites treated with 5 μM M β CD were unable to attach to Caco-2 cells, and the addition of MVs restored the ability to attach in a dose-dependent manner

(Fig. 2C). These results suggest that MVs bring back certain physical properties to the membrane of the trophozoites, and probably increase the presence of a putative molecule-receptor ligation.

3.3. Trophozoites from *Giardia intestinalis* secrete MVs that aid parasite attachment to host cells

To investigate whether MVs from *G. intestinalis* could facilitate the adhesion of trophozoites to host cells, we performed an adhesion assay using monolayers of Caco-2 cells, that resemble the enterocytes lining the small intestine, and trophozoites of *G. intestinalis* WB strain. Monolayers of Caco-2 cells in the semi-confluent state were incubated with 1×10^6 trophozoites of *G. intestinalis* in the presence of different concentrations of MVs from *G. intestinalis*, for 1 and 3 h at 37 °C and 5% CO_2 . Cells were then washed, stained with Giemsa and quantified by light microscopy. We detected a slight dose-dependent increase of *G. intestinalis*

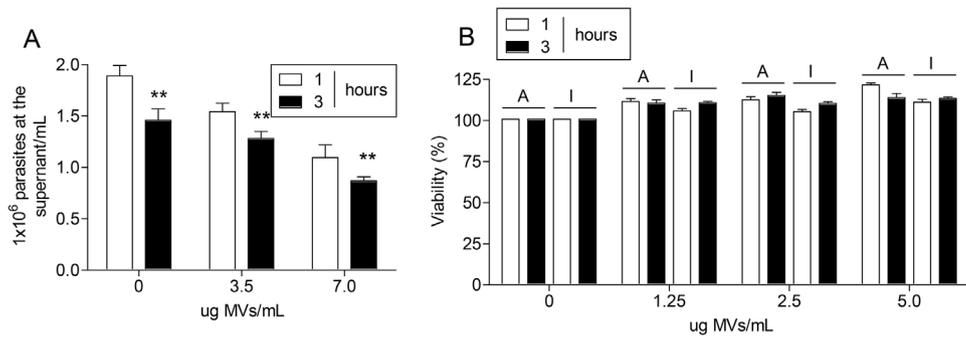


Fig. 2. Effect of lipid raft disruption by cholesterol depletion on MV production.

A) The extraction of membrane cholesterol decreases the production of MVs. Trophozoites were incubated with different concentrations of M β CD for one hour. Later the trophozoites were induced with 1 mM of CaCl₂, and the MVs released were quantified by flow cytometry. Measurements were made in triplicate and the results represent the mean \pm standard error of three independent experiments. The Student *t*-test was used for statistical analysis. The asterisks indicate the results that were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) compared to control. B) Treatment of *Giardia intestinalis* WB with the lipid raft-destabilizing methyl- β -cyclodextrin (M β CD) inhibits their adhesion to *Caco 2* cells. Adhesion of WB pre-treated with 0–10 μ M of M β CD to *Caco* cells was determined for 3 h at 37 $^{\circ}$ C. The trophozoites present in the supernatant were quantified by hemocytometer. C) MVs of *Giardia intestinalis* restore the ability of GI WB pre-treated with 5 μ M of M β CD to bind to *Caco-2* cells. The Adhesion of WB pre-treated with 5 μ M of M β CD to *Caco* cells was determined in the presence of different concentrations of purified MVs of GI for 3 h at 37C. Results represent the mean \pm the standard error from two independent experiments. The Student *t*-test was used for statistical analysis. The asterisks indicate the results that were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) compared to control.

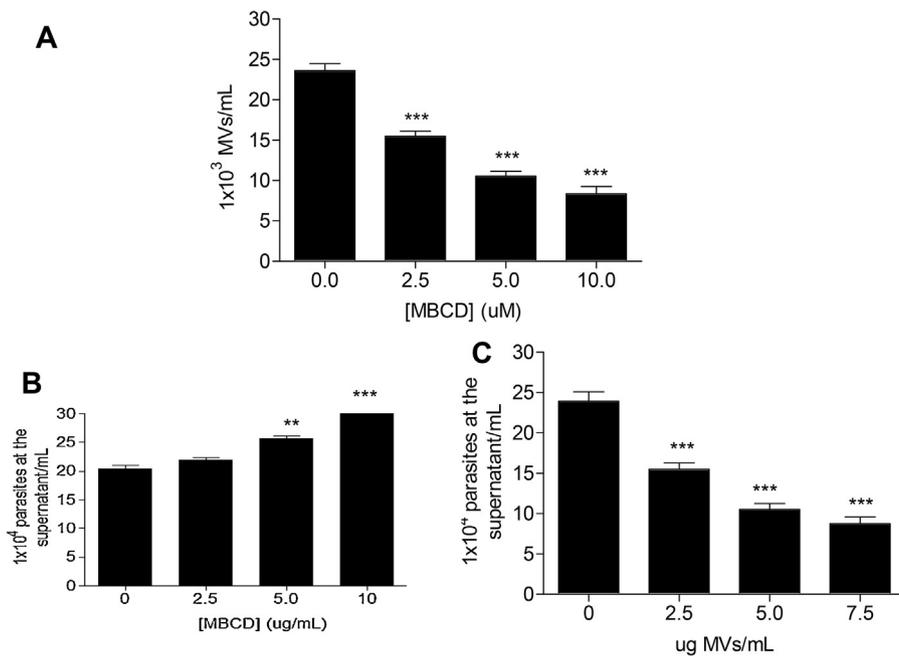


Fig. 3. Effect of *Giardia intestinalis* microvesicles on parasite adherence to *Caco-2* cells.

A) Trophozoites adherence to host cells in the presence of MVs. Trophozoites were incubated for 1 h (A) and 3 h, with *Caco-2* cells in the presence of different concentrations of MVs (previously obtained from trophozoites). The amount of adhering trophozoites to *Caco-2* cells was determined by counting the trophozoites present at the supernatant in a Neubauer chamber. The conditions were tested in duplicate. Results represent the mean \pm standard error of three independent experiments. The Student *t*-test was used for statistical analysis. The asterisks indicate the results that were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) compared to control. B) Effect of *G. intestinalis* MVs on viability of *Caco-2* cells, 5×10^3 cells/well being incubated in the presence of different concentrations of MVs from *G. intestinalis* trophozoites for 24 h. Cell viability was assessed by the MTS assay and the results are presented as percentages relative to untreated cells with MVs (control). Measurements were made in triplicate, the results represent the mean \pm standard error of three independent experiments. ANOVA with multiple comparisons was performed the statistical analysis. The asterisks indicate the results that were statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) respect to the control.

attachment to *Caco-2* cells at 1 h, and a strong 3-fold increase of adhesion of *G. intestinalis* to intestinal cells when parasites and host cells were incubated with 7 μ g of MVs compared to that without MVs. (Fig. 3A). Microvesicles treated with proteinase K (0.05 mg/ml; Sigma Aldrich) for 1 h at 37 $^{\circ}$ C and heat inactivated for incubation at 95 $^{\circ}$ C for 10 min were used as adhesion assays controls. The treated-MVs had no effect on the attachment of trophozoites to *Caco* cells (not shown)

To analyze the specificity of this MV-mediated effect, we next used MVs of *G. Intestinalis* in an invasion assay, using metacyclic trypomastigotes forms of *T. cruzi* and Vero cells. Even using higher

concentration of MVs (10 μ g), the rate of metacyclic trypomastigotes invasion was not modified in the presence of *G. intestinalis* MVs that the Mvs could have a specific effect on the parasite and not on Vero Cells. (data not shown).

3.4. MVs communicate with neighbouring cells and face innate immunity

Having shown the importance of MVs for cell adhesion, we next investigated the impact of MVs on neighbouring cells and in stimulating innate immunity. For this purpose, we analysed the effect

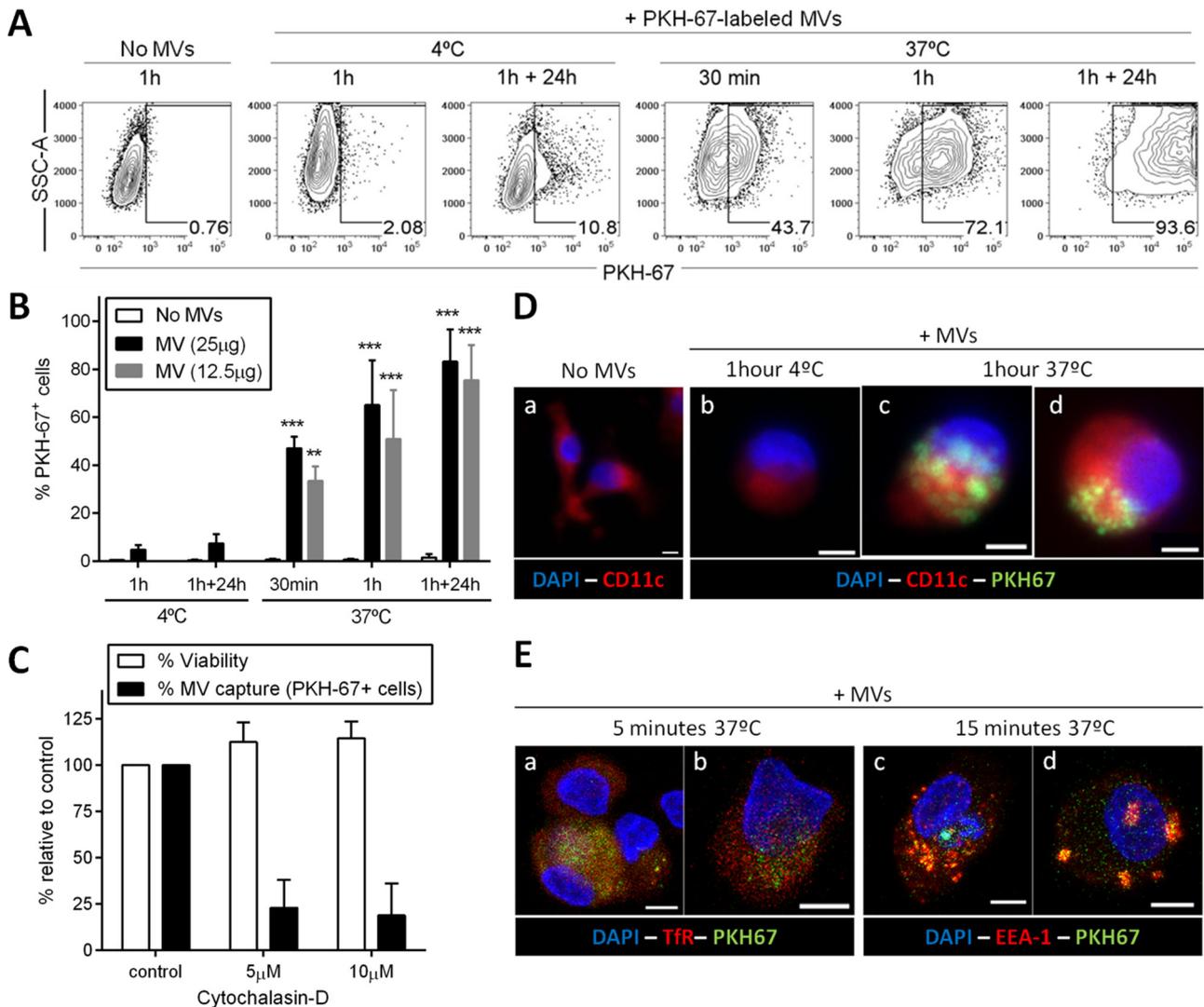


Fig. 4. MVs from *Giardia intestinalis* are actively captured by human immature dendritic cells (iDCs). A) and B) MVs labelled with PKH-67 were added to iDCs and capture was assessed after 30 min or 1 h at 37 °C or 4 °C without or with further 24 h of resting. The percentage of PKH-67⁺ iDCs was analysed by flow cytometry. A) Representative plots of the capture analysis performed by flow cytometry. B) Mean values of PKH67⁺ cells \pm SD of three independent experiments. C) Active capture by iDCs was corroborated by blocking with Cytochalasin-D incubation 30 min prior to EMV addition. The mean \pm SD of the viability (%AAD⁻ cells) and capturing cells (%PKH-67⁺ cells) is expressed as relative to the control. D) Inverted fluorescence imaging of iDCs pulsed with PKH-67- labelled MVs confirmed temperature-dependence of EMV internalization by iDCs (CD11c⁺, red) (b). After one hour of incubation, iDCs aggregate endocytosed MVs in sac-like compartments (c and d). E) MVs are internalized and sorted to the endocytic compartments of iDCs. Confocal imaging of iDCs pulsed with PKH-67- labelled MVs show co-localization (yellow) with transferrin receptor (TfR, red; a and b), at already 5 min after pulse. Within 15 min, MVs co-localized with the early endocytosis associated protein (EEA-1, red, c and d), showing aggregation of MVs in endosomal compartments. (For interpretation of the references to color in this figure legend, the reader is referred to the web version of this article.)

of MVs on the viability of Caco-2 cells and the ability of MVs to be captured by and modulate DC function.

Firstly, Caco-2 cells were incubated in the presence of different concentrations of MVs derived from *G. intestinalis* for 24 and 48 h, and a MTS viability assay was performed. After three independent experiments, we did not detect any effect on the viability of Caco-2 cells using different concentrations of MVs (Fig. 3B). We then analysed the interaction between MVs and DCs. Vesicles from GI were labelled with the aliphatic fluorophore PKH-67, and the interaction between MVs and iDCs was assessed by capture, phenotype of capturing cells, and alloproliferation analysis (Fig. 4).

Time-course experiments revealed that *G. intestinalis* MVs are rapidly internalized by iDCs (30–40% positively labelled cells only 30 min after pulse). Of note, capture of MVs did not affect viability of iDCs (Fig. 4A, B). Noticeably, capture was inhibited almost completely at low temperature (4 °C) and by the addition of cytochalasin D to the iDC culture, thus indicating a clear endocytic

component on the capture of MVs (Fig. 4B and C). MV internalization was confirmed also by inverted fluorescent microscopy, and cells pulsed at 4 °C showed no MVs within them (Fig. 4D). To further confirm the involvement of the endocytic pathway in the MV capture by iDCs, confocal images were taken at short time intervals. Five minutes after incubation, captured MVs colocalized with the early endocytosis marker Transferrin Receptor (TfR, red) (Fig. 4E). At later time points (15 min of incubation), MVs colocalized with the Early Endosome Associated protein (EEA-1, Fig. 4E), and after one hour of incubation, cells showed sac-like compartments where captured MVs probably aggregated all together (Fig. 4D).

To assess the capacity of MVs to induce DC maturation, iDCs were pulsed for one hour with MVs, washed, and further cultured for 24 h. At this time point, classical activation markers such as CD83 and HLA-DR did not vary their expression. However, GI-MVs-capturing iDCs upregulated the activation marker CD25 (Fig. 5A) suggesting a mild activation of iDCs. This mild activation

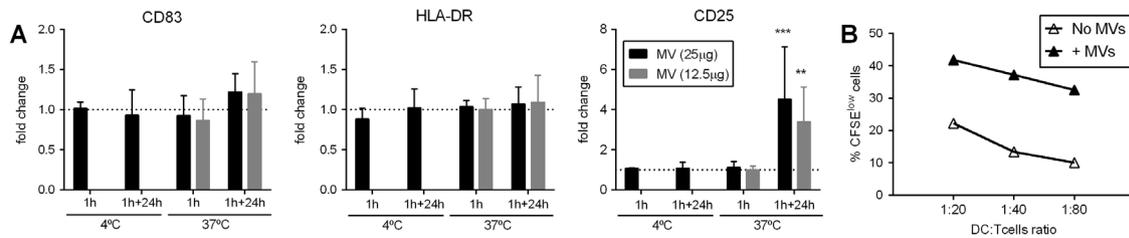


Fig. 5. MVs from *Giardia intestinalis* induce activation and enhance the allostimulation capabilities of iDCs. MVs were added to iDCs and cultured for 1 h. After extensive washing and 24 h resting, cells were checked for (A) activation marker expression (CD83, HLA-DR and CD25) and (B) allostimulation capabilities towards T cells. A) Fold change expression of the indicated markers, relative to non-pulsed iDCs. Data is depicted as mean \pm SD of three independent experiments. B) CFSE-labeled T cells were co-cultured with 1 h-pulsed, 24 h-resting iDCs at the indicated ratios. Alloproliferation of T cells was analysed according to the percentage of CFSE^{low} cells. Data is representative of three independent experiments.

was further confirmed by the increase of alloantigenic stimulation potential of DCs in T cell alloproliferation experiments (Fig. 5B).

3.5. Proteomic analysis of MVs suggest a modulation effect to host cells

We investigated the content of MVs released by mid-log trophozoites and by trophozoites induced to Cyst form by proteomic assays. The mass spectrometry analysis showed differences in the content of these MVs (Table 1). Only 11 proteins were identified from the trophozoite stage, seven of them previously reported as present in MVs in other organisms as described in the vesiclepedia (Kalra et al., 2012; <http://microvesicles.org>). In the case of MVs from cyst transition, 80 proteins were detected (36 of them still unknown), and from the 44 remaining, 24 proteins corresponded to previously identified EVs proteins (Table 1). Interestingly, in the cyst stage, proteins involved in pathogenesis like VSPs and giardins were identified in MVs (Table 1). Further investigation is needed to identify specific markers released by the different MV populations.

4. Discussion

4.1. Trophozoites from *Giardia intestinalis* respond to environmental changes releasing MVs that facilitate the interaction with host cells

The results presented in this study have demonstrated that trophozoites from *Giardia intestinalis* are able to release MVs in response to different pH levels, and calcium (Fig. 1). Many reports have shown the secretion of MVs during an interaction of protozoans with host cells. One interesting example of the role of MVs affecting the environment is the murine malaria model infected with *Plasmodium berghei*, which develops cerebral malaria (CM). EVs isolated from plasma derived from infected erythrocytes resulted in a potent activation of macrophages via toll-like receptors, whereas plasma-derived MVs from naïve animals did not induce macrophages (Couper et al., 2010). In the same murine model, the abrogation of MVs formation in mice knocked out for the gene *ABCA1* protected these animals against CM, demonstrating a link between EV production and pathogenesis (Combes et al., 2005).

In *Trypanosoma cruzi*, Cestari et al. (2012), demonstrated that metacyclic trypomastigotes forms when in contact with the monocytic THP-1 cell line, release MVs that inhibit C3 convertase, and aid the parasite to invade host cells. Recently, other groups have shown that MVs from *T. cruzi* have different sizes, and different effects. Bayer-Santos et al. (2013), found two types of EVs secreted by the parasites. Later, Garcia-Silva et al. (2014), Linhares-Lacerda et al. (2015), and Fernandez-Calero et al. (2015) showed the involvement of miRNA in MV transfer to host cells, indicating this mechanism as a novel modulating effect against neighbouring cells.

Other reports have also described that the protozoan *Trichomonas vaginalis* secretes extracellular vesicles similar to mammalian exosomes. The parasite-derived exosomes contain RNA, conserved exosomal proteins and parasite-specific proteins (Twu et al., 2013). They also demonstrated that *T. vaginalis* exosomes are able to deliver their contents to host cells and modulate host cell immune responses. Interestingly, exosomes from highly adherent parasite strains increased the adherence of poorly adherent parasites to vaginal and prostate epithelial cells. In contrast, exosomes from poorly adherent strains had no measurable effect on parasite adherence (Twu et al., 2013).

4.2. Microvesicle release is associated with lipid rafts and MVs are derived from the plasma membrane

The mechanism of MV release has been associated with induction or stimulation of cells producing an increase in intracellular calcium, which is mobilized by calpain in turn inhibiting flipase and activating scramblase. The biophysical step including the exovagination of the phospholipid bilayer is a mechanism still poorly understood. Different reports have shown that cholesterol should influence the lipid raft microdomains on the membrane that participate in MV formation. An interesting report by Del Conde et al. (2005), demonstrated that the coagulation process is dependent of the transference of tissue factors released from monocyte-MVs to platelets. This release is dependent of lipid raft microdomains. Moreover, the shedding of MVs containing tissue-factor was abolished with the depletion of membrane cholesterol. Interestingly the giardia genome (Giardia DB) has no annotation to GPI-anchor proteins, a family of proteins associated to sphingolipids and cholesterol on the plasma membrane and related to lipid raft formation. However a putative transamidase annotated could be transferring GPI to other acceptors. The recently described genome in *G. intestinalis* (Morrison et al., 2007) revealed the presence of lipids synthesis and metabolic genes. Which proteins and structures are related to lipids rafts formation need to be validated. Recently De Chatterjee et al. (2015) hypothesized that Lipid rafts act as molecular sensors on the plasma membrane. They used conjugated cholera toxin B (CTXB) which binds GMI glycolipid demonstrating lipid rafts at the membrane, ventral disc and caudal flagella. Moreover nystatin and filipin III, two well known LR disrupting agents inhibited the CTXB binding indicating that lipid rafts contain cholesterol and the removal destabilized the microdomains. De Chatterjee et al. (2015) discussed the possible connection between lipids rafts and sphingolipids metabolism in Giardia regulating the encystation process.

Our findings support the involvement of cholesterol in MV release, as we observed an inhibition of MV production using different concentrations of M β CD (Fig. 2A). Furthermore, the absence of cholesterol inhibited the parasites attachment to the host cell, and

Table 1

Proteomic analysis of microvesicles from *Giardia intestinalis* in trophozoites and cyst stages. Genebank accession number, name of the gene, relative abundance by EmPAI data, and presence in homologues dataset of MVs (microvesicles.org) are shown.

Accession	Name	Total EmPAI	Homologues Evs
1.2 MVs TROPHOZOITE			
tr A8BPC0 A8BPC0.GIAIC	Alpha-tubulin	2.79	yes
tr E2RTT6 E2RTT6.GIAIC	Ornithine carbamoyltransferase	2.42	yes
tr A8BSP4 A8BSP4.GIAIC	Glyceraldehyde-3-phosphate dehydrogenase	2	yes
tr E2RU36 E2RU36.GIAIC	Arginine deiminase	2	yes
tr E2RTN3 E2RTN3.GIAIC	Glucosamine-6-phosphate isomerase	2	yes
RRRRRtr A8BTS5 A8BTS5.GIAIC	Splicing factor-like protein, putative	1.04	no
RRRRRtr A8BUC9 A8BUC9.GIAIC	Dynein heavy chain, putative	0.75	yes
tr A8BS83 A8BS83.GIAIC	rRNA biogenesis protein RRP5	0.14	yes
RRRRRtr A8BBV7 A8BBV7.GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.08	ND
tr A8BG55 A8BG55.GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.06	ND
tr A8BAB7 A8BAB7.GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.05	ND
2.2 MVs CYST 24H			
Cytoskeleton			
tr A8BEI6 A8BEI6.GIAIC	Beta tubulin	4.86	yes
tr A8BV70 A8BV70.GIAIC	Actin related protein	2.13	yes
tr E2RTW1 E2RTW1.GIAIC	Alpha-7.2 giardin	1.44	no
tr E2RTU4 E2RTU4.GIAIC	Alpha-11 giardin	0.43	no
tr A8BPC0 A8BPC0.GIAIC	Alpha-tubulin	0.11	yes
tr A8BER9 A8BER9.GIAIC	Median body protein	0.06	no
Membrane and transport			
tr A8BN35 A8BN35.GIAIC	Kinesin-like protein	0.14	yes
RRRRRtr A8BT70 A8BT70.GIAIC	Ciliary dynein heavy chain 11	0.11	yes
RRRRRtr A8B7D3 A8B7D3.GIAIC	Dynein heavy chain	0.11	yes
tr E2RU51 E2RU51.GIAIC	TMP52	0.15	no
RRRRRtr A8BGS8 A8BGS8.GIAIC	WD-repeat membrane protein	0.11	no
tr A8BUL9 A8BUL9.GIAIC	Cation-transporting ATPase 2, putative	0.06	yes
tr A8BKH9 A8BKH9.GIAIC	Phospholipid-transporting ATPase IA, putative	0.06	yes
Metabolic enzymes			
tr E2RTT6 E2RTT6.GIAIC	Ornithine carbamoyltransferase	1.78	yes
RRRRRtr A8BQ1 A8BQ1.GIAIC	Phosphatidylinositol transfer protein alpha isoform	0.21	yes
RRRRRtr A8B3P9 A8B3P9.GIAIC	Acyl-CoA synthetase	0.02	yes
RRRRRtr A8B3D3 A8B3D3.GIAIC	Inorganic polyphosphate/ATP-NAD kinase, putative	0.08	no
RRRRRtr A8BKZ7 A8BKZ7.GIAIC	Protein tyrosine phosphatase-like protein	0.08	yes
tr A8BYC4 A8BYC4.GIAIC	Peroxioredoxin 1	0.28	yes
tr A8BVT2 A8BVT2.GIAIC	Midasin ATPase nuclear	0.12	yes
tr A8BW47 A8BW47.GIAIC	Kinase, NEK	0.1	no
RRRRRtr A8B8T1 A8B8T1.GIAIC	CDC19 Pyruvate kinase	0.08	yes
Nuclear proteins			
tr A8BUJ9 A8BUJ9.GIAIC	Histone H4	0.85	yes
RRRRRtr A8BYH2 A8BYH2.GIAIC	Histone H3	0.06	yes
RRRRRtr A8BTS5 A8BTS5.GIAIC	Splicing factor-like protein, putative	0.23	no
RRRRRtr E2RU53 E2RU53.GIAIC	Mre11 endonuclease	0.16	yes
tr A8B9T6 A8B9T6.GIAIC	Nuclear LIM interactor-interacting factor 1	0.11	no
RRRRRtr E2RU87 E2RU87.GIAIC	Mlh2-like protein	0.09	no
tr A8BN96 A8BN96.GIAIC	Reverse transcriptase/endonuclease, putative	0.06	yes
Surface proteins			
tr A8B1Y1 A8B1Y1.GIAIC	VSP	0.8	no
tr A8BZM3 A8BZM3.GIAIC	VSP with INR	0.39	no
tr A8B2E6 A8B2E6.GIAIC	VSP	0.3	no
tr A8BD73 A8BD73.GIAIC	VSP	0.24	no
Chaperones			
tr E2RU97 E2RU97.GIAIC	14-3-3 protein	0.56	yes
tr A8BCR6 A8BCR6.GIAIC	Cytosolic HSP70	0.53	yes
tr A8BX22 A8BX22.GIAIC	Stress-induced-phosphoprotein 1	0.07	yes
Other			
RRRRRtr A8BK23 A8BK23.GIAIC	Coiled-coil protein	0.17	no
tr A8B5R5 A8B5R5.GIAIC	Protein 21.1	0.23	no
RRRRRtr A8B463 A8B463.GIAIC	Protein 21.1	0.14	no
tr A8BAF5 A8BAF5.GIAIC	Coiled-coil protein	0.08	no
RRRRRtr A8BYJ8 A8BYJ8.GIAIC	Mucin-like protein	0.14	yes
tr A8B4Q1 A8B4Q1.GIAIC	NOD3 protein, putative	0.1	no
tr A8B4S4 A8B4S4.GIAIC	Retinoic acid induced 17-like protein	0.11	no
tr A8BNT5 A8BNT5.GIAIC	Ribosomal protein L9	0.12	yes
RRRRRtr A8BUV6 A8BUV6.GIAIC	Zinc finger domain protein	0.08	no

Table 1 (Continued)

Accession	Name	Total EmPAI	Homologues Evs
Unknown			
RRRRRtr A8BC17 A8BC17_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.32	
RRRRRtr A8B9Q6 A8B9Q6_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.22	
tr A8BHN6 A8BHN6_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.21	
tr A8BQ51 A8BQ51_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.21	
tr A8B4W6 A8B4W6_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.2	
tr A8BB64 A8BB64_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.19	
tr A8BSP2 A8BSP2_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.18	
tr D3KGH8 D3KGH8_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.15	
RRRRRtr A8B639 A8B639_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.15	
tr A8BFN9 A8BFN9_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.13	
tr A8B6D8 A8B6D8_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.12	
tr D3KI60 D3KI60_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.11	
tr A8BMW0 A8BMW0_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.1	
RRRRRtr A8BRV4 A8BRV4_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.1	
RRRRRtr A8BZ05 A8BZ05_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.1	
tr A8BAB7 A8BAB7_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.1	
tr A8B688 A8B688_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.1	
tr A8BVD4 A8BVD4_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.1	
tr D3KHS6 D3KHS6_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.09	
tr A8BYU8 A8BYU8_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.09	
RRRRRtr D3KGZ8 D3KGZ8_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.09	
tr A8BGC0 A8BGC0_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.09	
RRRRRtr A8BU47 A8BU47_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.08	
tr D3KG74 D3KG74_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.08	
tr A8BGY7 A8BGY7_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.07	
RRRRRtr A8BDU0 A8BDU0_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.07	
tr D3KGQ9 D3KGQ9_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.07	
tr D3KG99 D3KG99_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.07	
tr A8BQP6 A8BQP6_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.06	
tr A8BXY2 A8BXY2_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.06	
RRRRRtr A8BN55 A8BN55_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.06	
tr A8BK19 A8BK19_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.06	
RRRRRtr A8B4 × 8 A8B4 × 8_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.06	
tr A8BAT6 A8BAT6_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.06	
RRRRRtr A8BC94 A8BC94_GIAIC	Uncharacterized protein	0.05	

it was subsequently restored by the exogenous presence of MVs (Fig. 2B).

4.3. Microvesicles from *Giardia intestinalis* modulate dendritic cells implicating them in the pathogenesis

Factors associated with the pathology of giardiasis indicate a likely mechanical alteration of intestinal mucosa for the attachment of the trophozoites, due to the involvement of cysteine protease activities secreted by the parasite in contact with host cells. In fact, a lower activation or damage to host cell should be associated with a low inflammation that progresses in giardiasis. Previous work using mouse models to determine the role of various cytokines in immunity to *Giardia* have shown that IL-6 plays a critical role in the control of primary infections with this parasite (Bienz et al., 2003; Zhou et al., 2003). Here, we have analysed whether MVs release by trophozoites should alter dendritic cells, which are a family of professional antigen-presenting cells (APCs), that reside in all peripheral tissues in an immature state, capable of antigen uptake and processing. Dendritic cells (DC) when activated are key to enhanced cytokine secretion and enable DC migration and recruitment of other cell types. DC capture of *Giardia* MVs suggests an effective contact with host cells. Furthermore, *in vitro* or *in vivo* assays could indicate the role of MVs in dendritic cell modulation. Recently, some manuscripts have shown and reviewed the role of dendritic cells during protozoan–host cell interaction (*i.e.* Boscardin et al., 2016; Weidner et al., 2016; Feijó et al., 2016; Ersching et al., 2016). However, there are no current reports involving MVs from parasites in modulating dendritic cell functions.

4.4. Exosome and microvesicles content can alter neighbouring cells

There are numerous examples in the literature of protozoa releasing large amounts of material into the extracellular space as a form of cellular communication with host cells (Garcia-Silva et al., 2014; Linhares-Lacerda et al., 2015; Fernandez-Calero et al., 2015; Cestari et al., 2012). In *Giardia intestinalis*, the diarrhoea and malabsorption could be a direct result of the interaction of the parasite with the intestinal epithelium which might be mediated by the parasite itself, or by substances it secretes or by MVs that could alter neighbouring cells. Analysis of Caco-2 human intestinal epithelial cells demonstrated that *Giardia* infection resulted in a strong alteration of the expression profile of these cells, including stress-response genes and chemokines, as seen by microarray analyses (Roxström-Lindquist et al., 2005). Transcriptional changes in *G. intestinalis* during interaction with intestinal epithelial cells were also monitored by microarray analysis of *G. intestinalis* cDNAs, and indicated up-regulation of genes encoding enolase, cysteine proteinase, arginine deiminase and oxygen defence proteins (Ringqvist et al., 2011). Interestingly, contact of *G. intestinalis* with epithelial cells resulted in the release of metabolic enzymes (arginine deaminase, ornithine carbamoyltransferase and enolase) from *G. intestinalis*, which disabled host immune factors including nitric oxide (Ringqvist et al., 2008). A previous study also demonstrated that the excretory-secretory products (ESP) of *G. lamblia* contained major antigen(s) responsible for protection against infection in mice (Kaur et al., 1999, 2001). Oral administration of *G. lamblia* ESPs into BALB/c mice stimulated a Th2 response, which led to intestinal histological changes characterized by eosinophilic infiltration, and can induce host cell apoptosis, hypercellularity, and

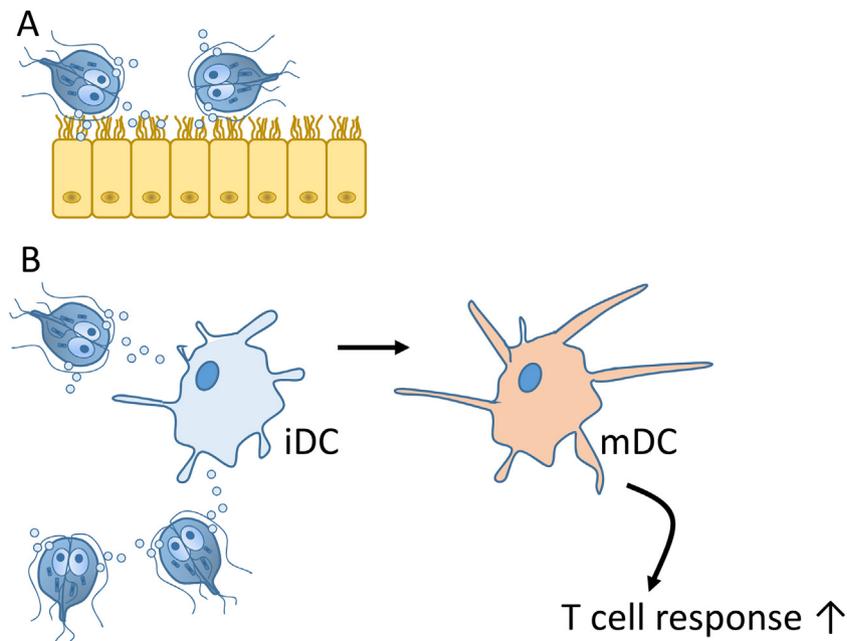


Fig. 6. *G. intestinalis* MVs increase parasite adherence to intestinal epithelial cells but uptake by iDC cells may through their activation help direct a T cell response. (A) *G. intestinalis* trophozoite EMVs increase the adherence of the parasite to intestinal epithelial cells. (B) *G. intestinalis* MVs are taken up by iDCs which are then activated and mature (showing upregulation of CD25). T cell alloproliferation experiments then showed an increase of the alloantigenic stimulation potential of DCs.

enterocytic desquamation (Jiménez et al., 2004). Glycoproteins in *G. lamblia* ESP were found to induce antibody production during giardiasis (Jiménez et al., 2007). Cysteine proteases present in *G. lamblia* ESP were essential for the induction of antibody and cytokine production in BALB/c mice infected with ESP (Jiménez et al., 2009). Our findings of small RNAs in the cargo of EMVs suggest that the parasite could transfer material to host cells through EMVs, modifying the cell phenotype. An interesting previous report supports this possibility; the infection of human ileocecal adenocarcinoma cell line HCT-8 with *Giardia intestinalis* can induce host cell apoptosis. Signs of chromatin condensation and caspase 3 activation was found to occur in monolayers exposed to different *G. intestinalis* assemblages (Koh et al., 2013). Nuclear fragmentation and cell death was suppressed with a caspase 3 inhibitor. The most important point was the demonstration that cellular extracts from *Giardia intestinalis* were able to induce apoptosis without contact with the parasite. This fact supports the idea that EVs should alter the host cell. MicroRNAs have been shown to have a role in cancer, cell reprogramming, hypertension regulation and other chronic diseases (reviewed by Tao et al., 2016; Stepicheva and Song, 2016; Makarova et al., 2016), and could be essential in host-parasite cell interactions.

Taken together, our findings and new concepts reveal another facet to the ever increasingly complex environment of dynamic cellular communication between parasites and hosts. The content of MVs, including protein and nucleic acids, may modify the cell phenotype avoiding innate immunity and producing the infection (Fig. 6). The identification of cellular targets and inhibitors of microvesiculation could potentially represents a novel strategy to control the diseases, and are currently under investigation.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ejcb.2017.01.005>.

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