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PEARLS OF LABORATORY MEDICINE

Paroxysmal Nocturnal Hemoglobinuria

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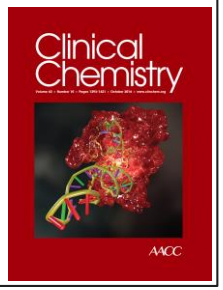

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Paroxysmal Nocturnal Hemoglobinuria (PNH)

- Rare benign clonal acquired hematopoietic stem-cell (HSC) disorder
- Somatic mutation of X-linked phosphatidylinositol glycan class A (*PIGA*) gene
- Can arise *de novo* or in the setting of acquired bone marrow (BM) failure
- Product of *PIGA* gene is required for synthesis of anchor protein that ties other proteins to the cell surface known as glycosylphosphatidylinositol (GPI-anchor)
- Two GPI-anchored proteins (CD55&CD59) normally function as complement regulatory proteins

CD59

- Membrane inhibitor of reactive lysis (MIRL)
- Forms defensive shield for RBCs
- Inhibits the assembly of the membrane attack complex

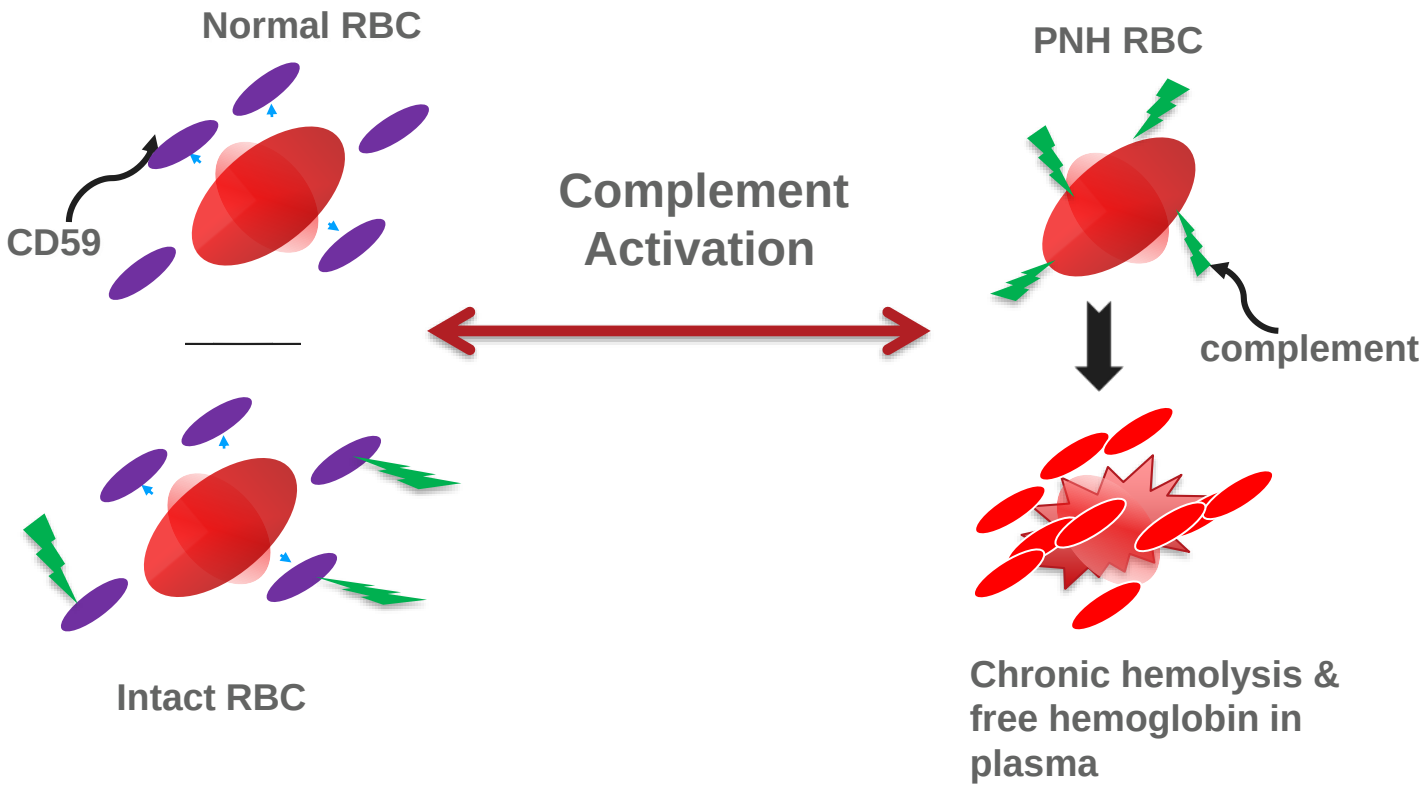
CD55

- Decay accelerating factor (DAF)
- Prevents formation and augments instability of C3 convertase

Paroxysmal Nocturnal Hemoglobinuria (PNH)

- Deficiency can be partial or complete
- Seen in WBCs and RBCs
- Characterized by continuous destruction of PNH RBCs due to vulnerability to complement mediated lysis

RBCs Susceptible to Lysis by Terminal Complement Activation



Clinical Manifestations of PNH

- Fatigue, impaired quality of life
- Anemia
- Dyspnea
- Chronic kidney disease
- Abdominal pain
- Pulmonary hypertension
- Erectile dysfunction
- Dysphagia
- Thrombosis
- Hemoglobinuria
- Bone marrow failure

PNH

Paroxysmal

Destructive progressive ongoing hemolysis even in the absence of symptoms

Nocturnal

Hemolysis in PNH is subtle and constant 24 hours a day

Hemoglobinuria

Less common complication

~ 75% of patients present without hemoglobinuria

Pathophysiology of PNH

- **Hemolysis**
  - Complement activation
- **Chronic kidney disease**
  - Toxicity of free hemoglobin and iron with extensive hemoglobin deposition
- **Esophageal spasm, abdominal pain, pulmonary hypertension, fatigue and smooth muscle dystonia**
  - Nitric oxide scavenging
- **Thrombosis**
  - Nitric oxide depletion
  - Disrupted fibrinolysis
  - Disrupted tissue factor inhibitor pathway
- **Bone marrow failure**
  - PNH is closely related to bone marrow failure syndromes
  - Mutant HSC exhibit a survival advantage and tend to expand leading to hemolysis

Clinical Categories of PNH

1. Classical PNH, includes hemolytic and thrombotic patients

- Marked hemolysis
- Hemoglobinuria
- Lactate dehydrogenase (LDH)
- Normal BM with erythroid hyperplasia
- PNH clone >50%

2. PNH in the setting of BM failure syndromes

- Mild hemolysis
- Minimal abnormality in biochemical markers of hemolysis
- BM shows the concomitant BM failure
- PNH clone usually small (<10%)

3. Subclinical PNH

- No clinical or biochemical evidence of intravascular hemolysis
- BM shows concomitant BM failure
- Small PNH clone (<1%)

Early Diagnosis is Essential for Improved Patient Management and Prognosis

International Clinical Cytometry Society (ICCS) Guidelines and International PNH Interest Group (IPIG) recommend evaluation of high risk patients:

- Coombs negative hemolytic anemia
- Hemoglobinuria
- Aplastic anemia (AA)
- Refractory anemia-myelodysplastic syndrome (RA-MDS)
- Unexplained venous or arterial thrombosis
- Unexplained cytopenia

PNH Clone in Patients with AA

- Aplastic anemia: disease where the BM stops making RBCs, WBCs, and platelets
- PNH clone present in 40-50% of patients with severe AA
- PNH clone size in patients with AA may increase rapidly and unpredictably
- Presence of PNH clone in severe AA is associated with low morbidity and mortality, and reported to be predictive of response to immunosuppressive therapy
- Clone size often decreases after immunosuppressive therapy

PNH Clone in Patients with MDS

- Myelodysplatic syndrome: group of diverse BM disorders where BM does not produce enough healthy blood cells
- More than 1 out of 18 patients with MDS have PNH clone
- Most studies showed that PNH clones were only present in patients with RA-MDS
- RA-MDS patients with detectable PNH clone have more indolent clinical course
- PNH clone in other categories of MDS has been reported in limited number of studies

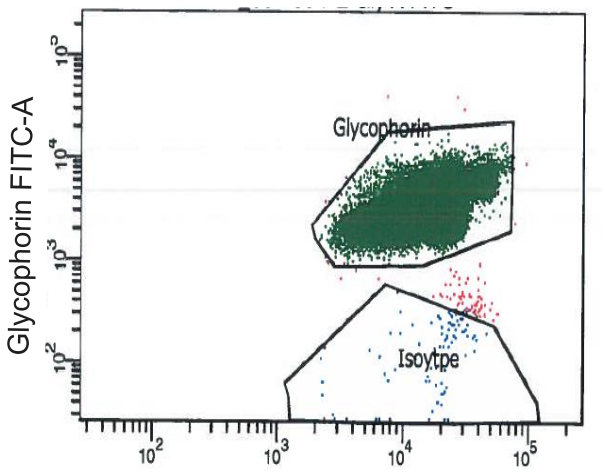
Diagnosis of PNH

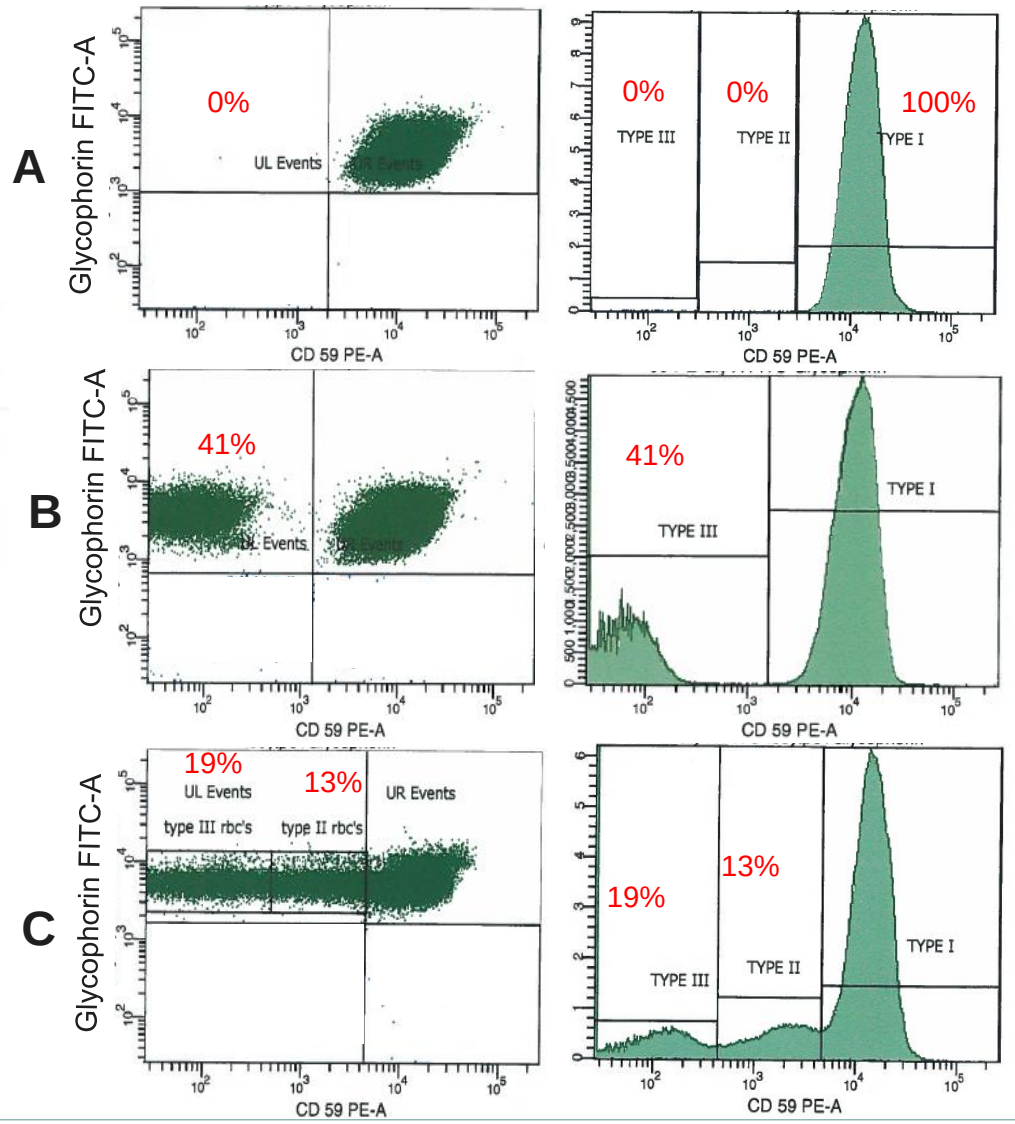
- Flow-cytometry performed on peripheral blood is the established method of choice for the diagnosis and monitoring of PNH
- Both RBCs and WBCs should be tested
  - WBC PNH clone can sometimes be detected in the absence of a RBC clone
- A significant RBC PNH clone is always associated with a WBC clone
  - Explained by the fact that RBC clone size may be affected by hemolysis or transfusion

RBC Analysis

- Identify and quantify cells lacking expression of CD59 or CD55 (Type III)
- Identify and quantify cells partially deficient (Type II) if present
- Glycophorin-A (CD235a): lineage marker used to gate on RBCs
- CD59 is superior over CD55

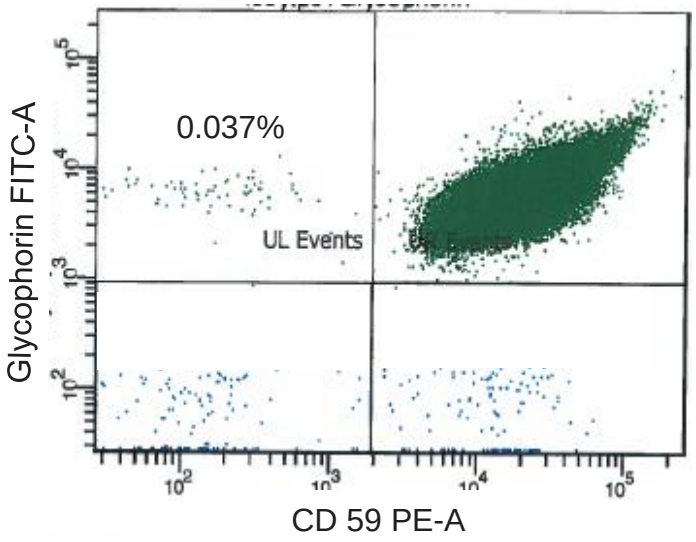
RBC Analysis

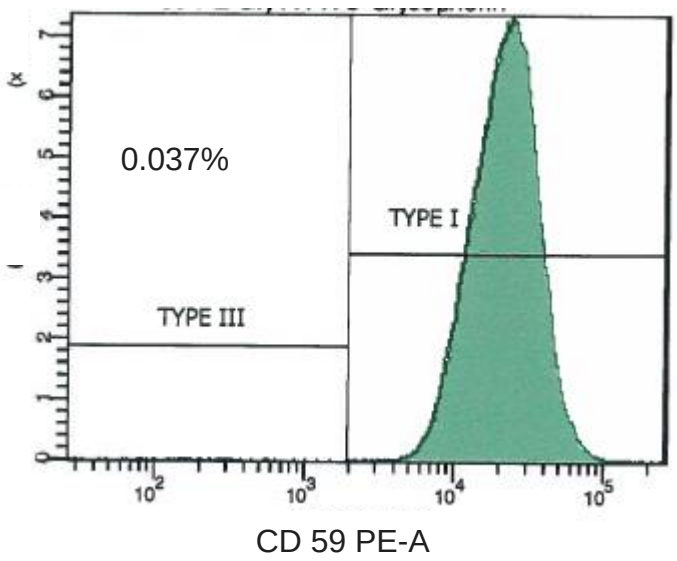




High Sensitivity RBC Analysis

- Count more RBCs for small PNH clone
- Sensitivity of 0.005 % for RBCs is achievable





WBC Analysis

- **Granulocytes**
  - Most commonly used to assess PNH clone size
  - Occasionally Type II granulocytes can be detected

- **Monocytes**
  - Analyzed to confirm the granulocyte PNH clone
  - Monocytes clone size often higher than granulocyte clone
  - Sensitivity and precision is lower due to lower cell number
  - Occasionally Type II can be detected

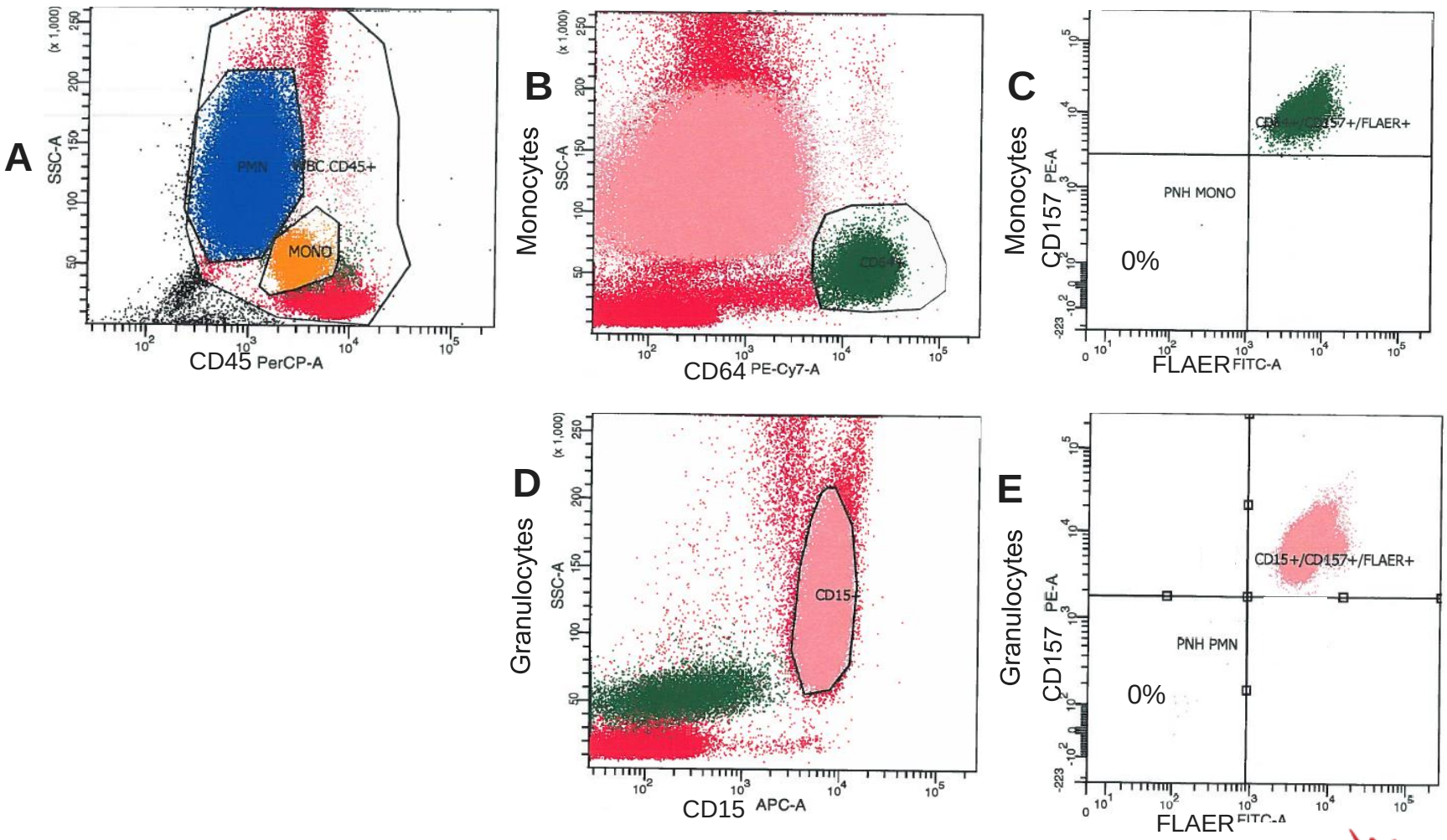
WBC Analysis

- **Lineage specific gating for higher sensitivity**
  - CD15 to gate on granulocytes
  - CD64 or CD33 to gate on monocytes
- **Assess two GPI linked proteins on each cell population**
  - CD24 or CD157 and FLAER are evaluated on granulocytes
  - CD14 or CD157 and FLAER are evaluated on monocytes
- FLAER (fluorescein-labeled pro-aerolysin) is a flourochrome conjugated inactive bacterially derived channel forming protein; binds specifically to GPI anchors

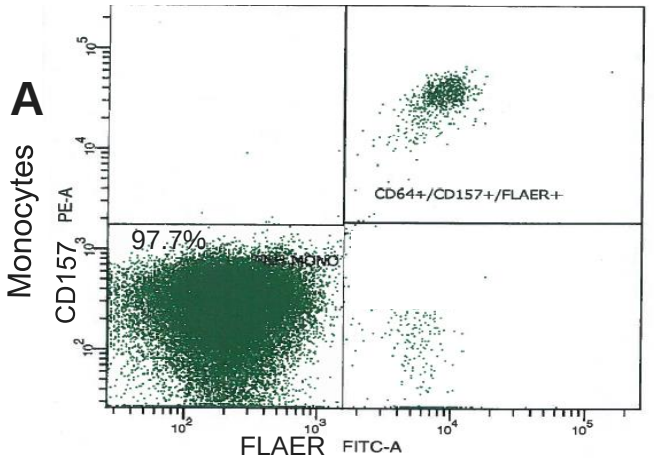
High Sensitivity WBC Analysis

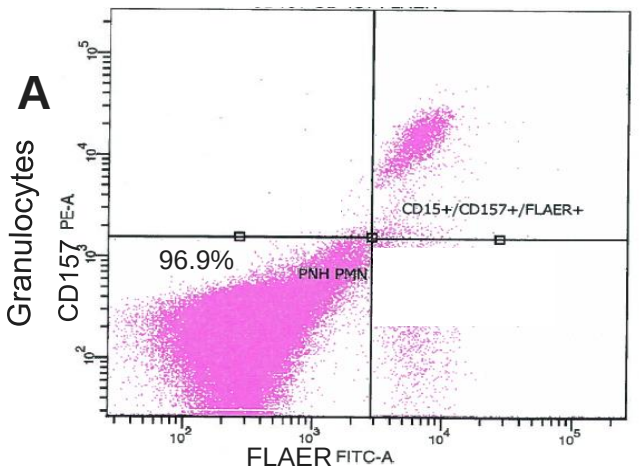
- Useful for the diagnosis of subclinical PNH associated with BM failure disorders
- Not needed for the diagnosis of classic PNH
- Sensitivity of 0.01% for WBC is achievable
- Acquisition of sufficient events, evaluation of multiple parameters and assessing frequency of PNH cells in normal samples are critical to limit false positives

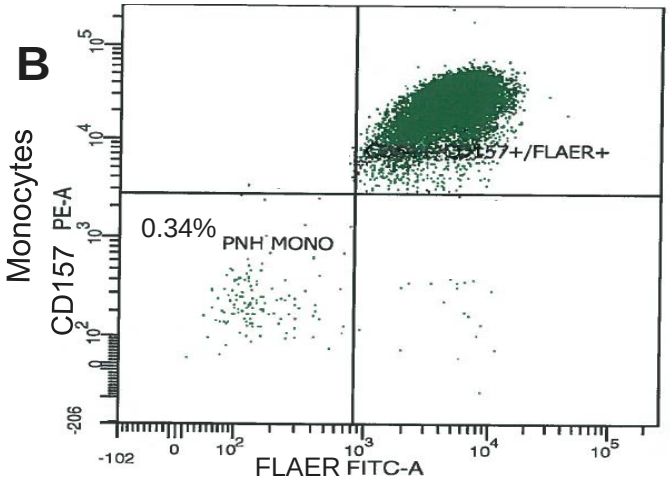
WBC Analysis

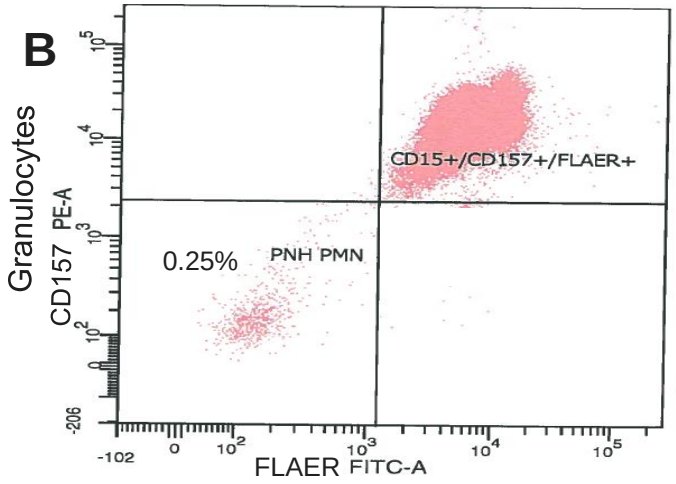


WBC Analysis

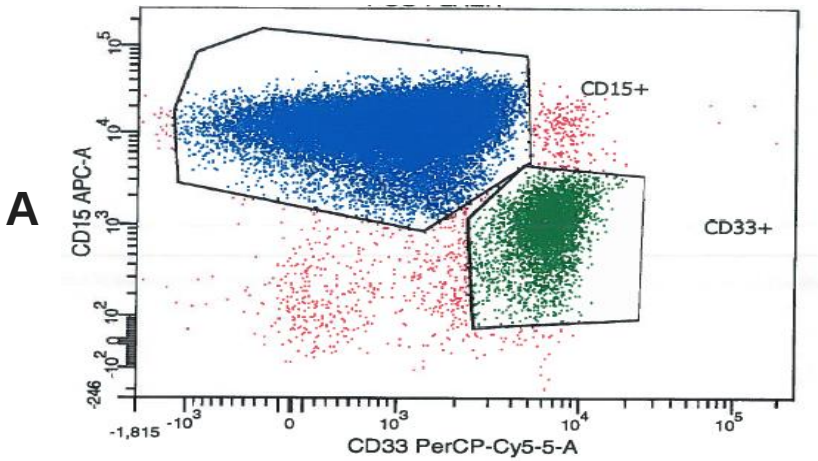


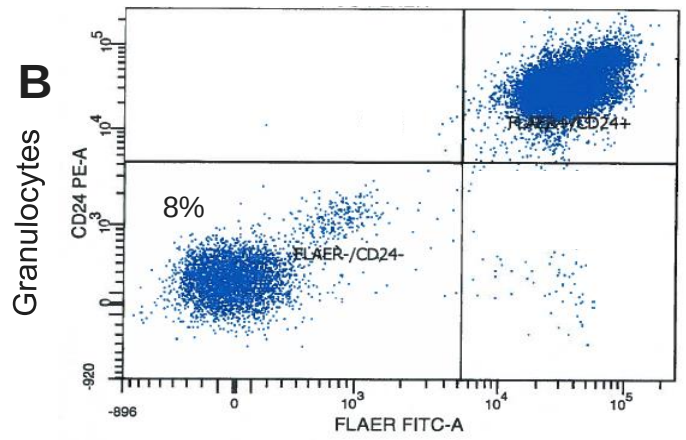


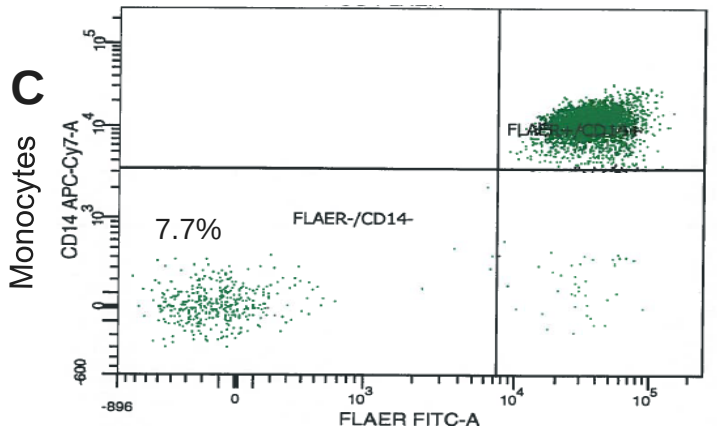




WBC Analysis







Treatment of PNH

- Folic acid supplementation and supportive care for patients with minimal symptoms
- Blood transfusion
- Steroids
- Prophylactic anticoagulation: not been proven to decrease risk of thrombosis
- Allogenic BM transplantation
- Eculizamab (Soliris)

Treatment of PNH

Eculizamab

- Humanized monoclonal antibody that effectively blocks complement activation at C5, inhibits terminal complement activation
- Stops hemolysis and related effects
- Markedly reduces transfusion requirements
- Patients with subclinical clones are not candidates for treatment with eculizumab
- Blocking the terminal portion of complement predisposes to *Neisseria*
- Expensive
- Must be given IV every 12-14 days

RBC PNH Clone Size in a Patient Treated with Eculizamab

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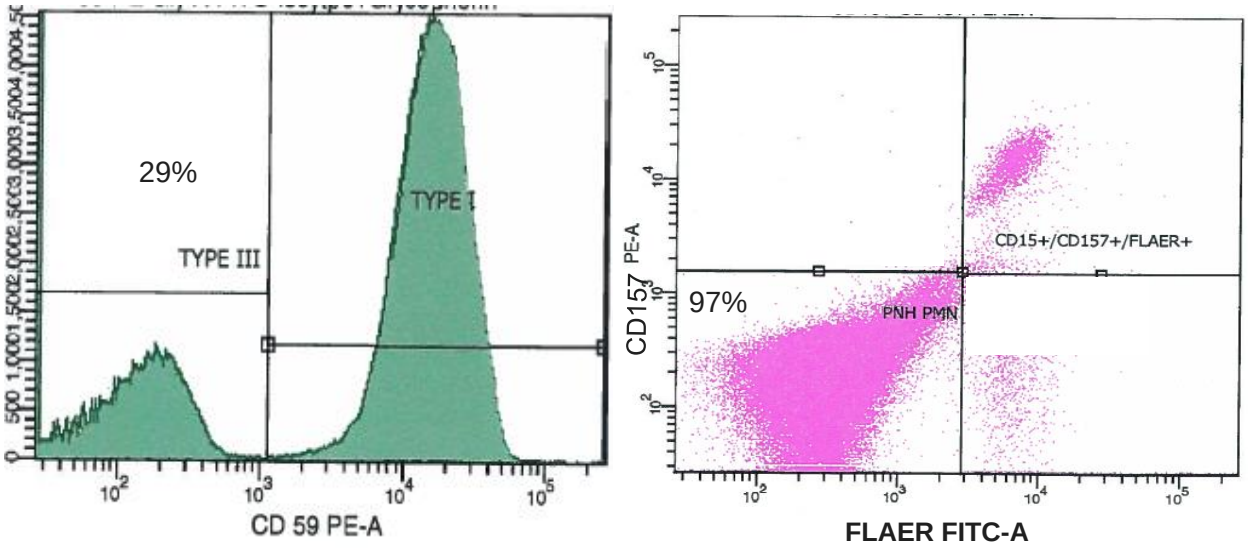

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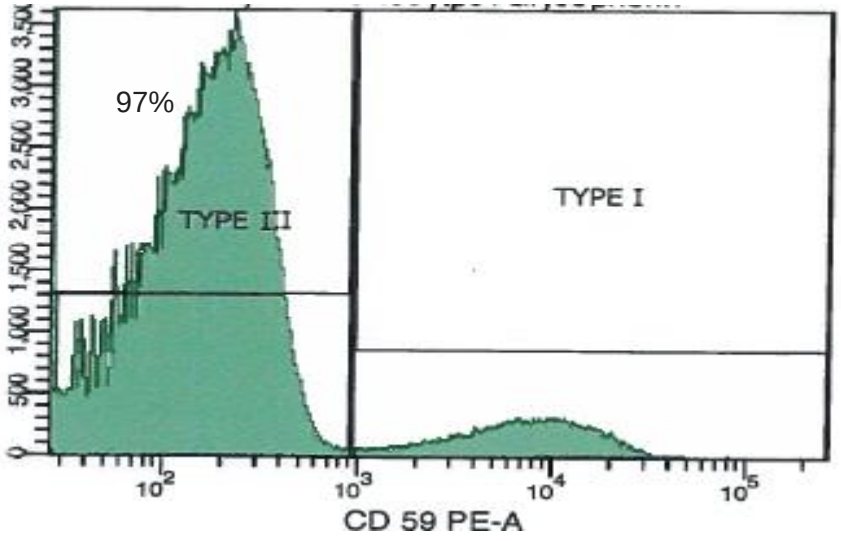

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Disclosures/Potential Conflicts of Interest

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