

IRAP+ endosomes restrict TLR9 activation and signaling

Joël Babdor, Delphyne Descamps, Aimé Cézaire Adiko, Mira Tohmé, Sophia Maschalidi, Irini Evnouchidou, Luiz Ricardo Vasconcellos, Mariacristina de Luca, Francois-Xavier Mauvais, Meriem Garfa-Traore, et al.

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1	IRAP endosomes restrict TLR9 activation and signaling
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44 Abstract

Retention of intracellular Toll-Like Receptors (TLRs) in the endoplasmic reticulum prevents 45 46 their activation under basal conditions. TLR9, whose trafficking is still largely unknown, is 47 activated by sensing ligands in specific endosomal compartments. Here, we describe the 48 identification of IRAP (insulin responsive aminopeptidase) vesicles as major cellular 49 compartments for the early steps of TLR9 activation in dendritic cells (DCs). Both CpG and 50 TLR9 were found to be cargos of IRAP endosomes. In the absence of IRAP, CpG and TLR9 51 trafficking to lysosomes and TLR9 signaling were enhanced in DCs and in mice following 52 bacterial infection. IRAP stabilized CpG-containing endosomes by interacting with the actin 53 nucleation factor FHOD4, slowing down TLR9 activation in lysosomes. Thus, endosome 54 retention through IRAP interaction with the actin cytoskeleton is a mechanism that prevents 55 TLR9 hyper-activation in DCs. 56

59 Innate and adaptive immune responses depend on the ability of toll-like receptors (TLRs) to 60 discriminate between different classes of microbial products and initiate specific signaling 61 cascades. While microbial products with no equivalent in mammalian cells, such as the components of the bacterial wall, are recognized by surface TLRs (1, 2, 4, 5 and 6), pathogen 62 derived nucleic acids are sensed by intracellular TLRs (3, 7, 8 and 9). Recognition of nucleic 63 64 acids by intracellular TLRs has an intrinsic potential to trigger autoimmune diseases through interaction with self nucleic acids¹. To avoid inappropriate activation of endosomal TLRs, 65 the trafficking of these receptors is tightly controlled. Thus, in basal conditions the receptors 66 67 are located in the endoplasmic reticulum (ER) and translocate to endocytic vesicles only after cell stimulation by TLR ligands. Although all intracellular TLRs reside in the ER and require 68 the chaperone Unc93b for their transfer to endosomes 2,3 , the trafficking pathways that move 69 the receptors into the endocytic pathway show considerable variation among intracellular 70 TLRs ⁴⁻⁶. For example, the TLR7/Unc93b complex traffics from Golgi stacks directly to 71 72 endosomes using the clathrin adaptor AP4, while the TLR9/Unc93b complex is directed to the cell surface and reaches the endosomes via AP2-mediated clathrin-dependent endocytosis 73 6 74

In addition to the transfer into the endocytic pathway, a second step that controls the
activation of endosomal TLRs is their partial proteolysis by an array of different proteases,
specific for each TLR ^{5,7-12}.

Although less often mentioned, the intracellular trafficking of its ligand also controls the activation of TLR9. TLR9 ligands (CpG) are internalized via clathrin-mediated endocytosis in early endosomes and translocate to late LAMP⁺ compartments ². TLR9 activation depends on CpG localization, since the abrogation of CpG translocation to LAMP⁺ vesicles by PIK fyve inhibitors decreased TLR9 signaling ^{13,14}. Thus, the intracellular trafficking of both, the ligand and the receptor are essential for the control of TLR9 activation.

The complexity of TLR9 and CpG trafficking is rendered possible by the diversity and 84 85 plasticity of the endocytic system. This system includes early endosomes that fuse to generate 86 the sorting endosomes. From there, cargos are directed to different organelles, such as Rab4⁺ 87 fast recycling endosomes, Rab11⁺ slow recycling endosomes, the trans Golgi network (TGN) or lysosomes. Next to these universal routes of endosome trafficking, specialized cells, such 88 89 as dendritic cells (DCs), display particular, albeit poorly characterized endosomal populations that affect TLR function, such as the VAMP3⁺ vesicles, which are involved in TLR9 90 91 trafficking¹⁵.

A particular and abundant endocytic population present in DCs, not yet investigated in the context of TLR signaling, is the slow recycling endosomes. They are characterized by the presence of the aminopeptidase IRAP (Insulin Responsive AminoPeptidase), a type II transmembrane protein composed of a catalytic site localized in the endosomal lumen and a cytosolic domain of 110 amino acids. We have previously demonstrated that in DCs, IRAP⁺ vesicles are rapidly recruited to DC phagosomes, where the enzymatic activity of IRAP is involved in antigen processing during MHC-I cross presentation ^{16,17}.

- 99 In addition to DCs, IRAP⁺ endosomes have been extensively studied in adipocytes, were they 100 are called Glut4 storage vesicles (GSVs) and are rapidly transported to the cell surface under 101 insulin stimulation. After the fusion of the endosomes with the cell membrane, Glut4 remains at the cell surface to facilitate glucose uptake, while IRAP is rapidly internalized ¹⁸. Thus. 102 103 both in adipocytes and in DCs, IRAP displays a complex trafficking, sensitive to external 104 regulation by insulin or phagocytic receptors activation. The regulated trafficking of IRAP 105 depends on the cytosolic domain of the enzyme, which has been shown to interact with several proteins involved in vesicles formation or in cytoskeleton remodeling, such as the 106 golgin p115¹⁹, vimentin²⁰ and FHOS (formin homologue overexpressed in the spleen, also 107 108 called FHOD1)²¹. Whether these proteins and their interaction with the cytosolic domain of IRAP play a role in the complex trafficking of IRAP and IRAP⁺ endosomes is not known. 109
- Considering the dynamic and potentially regulated nature of IRAP⁺ endosomes, we wondered 110 111 if IRAP plays a role in endosomal TLR trafficking and activation. We report here that the 112 early step in TLR9 trafficking and CpG endocytosis requires IRAP. The absence of IRAP 113 affects both CpG and TLR9 trafficking, leading to a dramatic increase in TLR9 signaling in 114 vitro and in vivo following TLR9 stimulation. These results can be explained by the central 115 role of IRAP in anchoring TLR9 endosomes to the actin cytoskeleton, which would limit 116 TLR9-driven inflammatory responses. These findings provide a mechanistic explanation to the link between IRAP mutations and autoimmune disorders implicating TLR9²² and identify 117 118 new factors and cellular pathways involved in TLR9 activation.
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120 RESULTS

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122 IRAP deletion increases TLR9 response

To address the role of IRAP in TLRs signaling, wild type (wt) and IRAP-deficient (ko) bone marrow derived dendritic cells (BM-DCs) were stimulated with ligands specific for intracellular and membrane TLRs: polyIC for TLR3, Imiquimod for TLR7, CpG-B for TLR9 and LPS for TLR4, and the production of the pro-inflammatory cytokines IL-6, IL-12p40,
TNF . While IRAP deletion did not affect TLR3- and TLR4-dependent

128 pro-inflammatory cytokine production, it enhanced pro-inflammatory cytokine production 129 driven by TLR9 (**Fig. 1a**) and TLR7 activation (**Supplementary Fig. 1a**). These results

130 suggest that IRAP affects the NF-κB pathway downstream of TLR9 and probably TLR7.

Since type I IFN production depends on TLR9 signaling through IRF-7, we wondered whether IRAP deletion affected this cytokine. We measured IFN- β production by wt and IRAP-deficient BM-DCs stimulated with TLR3, 4 and 9 ligands (**Fig. 1b**). IRAP deletion significantly increased only TLR9-driven IFN- β production but not IFN- β production by TLR3 and TLR4. Thus, IRAP disturbed the amplitude of both pro-inflammatory cytokine and type I IFN production in a TLR9-dependent manner in BM-DCs.

137 To address whether the hypersensitivity of IRAP-deficient cells to TLR9 ligands was 138 restricted to BM-DCs, which correspond to monocyte-derived inflammatory DCs, we purified 139 conventional DCs (cDCs) and plasmacytoïd DCs (pDCs) from the spleen and stimulated them 140 with a TLR9 agonist. When incubated with CpG, IRAP-deficient spleen cDCs (Fig. 1c) and 141 pDCs (Fig. 1d) produced significantly higher amounts of pro-inflammatory cytokines and INF- α than their wt counterparts. These results demonstrated that IRAP expression was 142 143 required to prevent exacerbated inflammatory cytokine production in response to TLR9 144 activation in all tested DC subsets.

145 At least two mechanisms might account for the increased TLR9 response in IRAP-deficient DCs. IRAP⁺ vesicles, which are storage compartments sensitive to regulation by cell-specific 146 147 stimulation in adipocytes, could store pro-inflammatory cytokines and control their trafficking and secretion. Alternatively, IRAP⁺ endosomes could directly influence TLR9 or CpG 148 149 trafficking. We thus analyzed the intracellular localization of pro-inflammatory cytokines in wt and IRAP-deficient cells. While both IL-6 and IL-12 could not be detected in unstimulated 150 151 cells, incubation with CpG resulted in staining for IL-6 and IL-12 in intracellular structures with a morphology indicative of Golgi stacks but devoid of IRAP staining (Supplementary 152 153 Fig. 1b). The staining for the cis-Golgi matrix protein GM130, consistent with previous reports, confirmed IL-6 localization in Golgi stacks (Supplementary Fig. 1c)²³. 154 155 Thus, IRAP⁺ endosomes are unlikely to be implicated in trafficking or secretion of IL-6 or IL-

156 12(p40) and could be involved in a step upstream their synthesis. In support to this

157 hypothesis, we found that DCs lacking IRAP expressed significantly higher levels of pro-

158 inflammatory cytokine mRNAs than wt DCs upon CpG but not LPS stimulation (Fig. 1e-f).

159 The increase in cytokines, both at the mRNA and protein level, in IRAP deficient cells following TLR9 stimulation should be correlated with an enhanced TLR9 signaling. To 160 161 specifically investigate TLR9 signaling, we tested the association of the MyD88 adaptor with 162 the transcription factors NF- κ B and IRF7. The proximity ligation assay (Duolink), which detects protein complexes in situ²⁴, demonstrated a significantly increased association of 163 MyD88 with NF-κB (Fig. 2a) and of MyD88 with IRF7 (Fig. 2b) in IRAP-deficient cells, as 164 165 compared with wt cells. 166 As a consequence of TLRs activation, the mitogen-activated protein kinase ERK is rapidly

phosphorylated. Indeed, ERK phosphorylation was increased in IRAP deficient cells after phosphorylated. Indeed, ERK phosphorylation was increased in IRAP deficient cells after CpG stimulation, as detected by immunoblot (**Fig. 2c**). In addition, the last step of NF- κ B activation, the phosphorylation of I κ B- α , was also significantly increased in IRAP-deficient cells after CpG but not LPS treatment (**Fig. 2d**), indicating an enhanced TLR9 signaling in the absence of IRAP.

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173 IRAP-deficient mice display a hyper-inflammatory phenotype driven by TLR9174 activation

Our *in vitro* data demonstrated the regulation of TLR9 signaling by IRAP. We next addressed the question whether IRAP-deficient mice display increased TLR9 activation. To test this, we measured the level of IL-6 in the serum of wt and IRAP-deficient mice 2 h after intravenous injection of PBS, CpG-B or LPS. While wt and IRAP-deficient animals responded identically to PBS and LPS injection, TLR9 stimulation led to higher levels of IL-6 in the serum of mice lacking IRAP than in wt animals (**Fig. 3a**).

We wondered if the observed exacerbated pro-inflammatory TLR9 signaling might affect the 181 182 innate immune response during a bacterial infection. Pseudomonas aeruginosa (P. aeruginosa) is an opportunistic Gram-negative bacterium that activates several TLRs 183 including TLR9 on alveolar macrophages (AM) and epithelial cells ²⁵. TLR9-deficient mice 184 were recently shown to be resistant to P. aeruginosa infection, suggesting that TLR9 185 signaling can have deleterious effects in this model ²⁶. In order to test whether the TLR9-186 187 dependent hyper-activation observed in IRAP-deficient mice could affect survival upon 188 bacterial pulmonary infection, we intranasally inoculated IRAP-deficient and wt mice with 189 10⁶ cfu of *P. aeruginosa* and monitored them for survival. At least 36% of wt mice survived 190 during the two weeks of observation, while all IRAP-deficient mice died within 72 h after 191 infection (Fig. 3b). We then investigated the correlation between mice survival and the

192 inflammatory response monitored in the lungs 24 h post-infection. In infected IRAP-deficient 193 mice, broncho-alveolar lavage (BAL) fluid contained higher levels of KC, IL-6, TNF- α and 194 IL-1 β than in wt mice (Fig. 3c). Since AMs are the first innate immune cells to encounter 195 bacteria in the lungs, we isolated AM and tested their cytokine production upon TLR9 and 196 TLR4 stimulation in vitro. While a response was barely detectable in AM isolated from wt 197 mice, IRAP-deficient AMs secreted substantial higher amounts of all pro-inflammatory 198 cytokines tested upon CpG stimulation (Fig. 3d) in comparison to wt mice. In contrast, IRAP 199 deficiency did not alter IL-6 and TNF- α secretion upon LPS stimulation, indicating that the 200 hyper-inflammatory phenotype produced was restricted to TLR9 (Fig. 3d).

201 To control for a potential difference between the two mouse strains in their ability to clear 202 bacteria from the lungs, we measured the pulmonary bacterial load and found it to be identical 203 in IRAP-deficient and wt mice (Fig. 3e). Consistent with an identical ability of both strains to 204 clear bacteria, P. aeruginosa infection led to a similar accumulation of neutrophils and 205 macrophages/monocytes in the airways of both groups (Supplementary Fig. 2a). In addition, 206 myeloperoxidase activity that mirrors neutrophil degranulation was similar in BALs from 207 both wt and IRAP-deficient mice (Supplementary Fig. 2b). Altogether, these experiments suggest that following P. aeruginosa infection, IRAP-deficient mice died earlier probably 208 209 because of an excessive inflammatory response driven by TLR9 hyper-stimulation.

210

211 IRAP enzymatic activity is not involved in TLR9 activation

212 Our results showed that proper regulation of TLR9 signaling required IRAP. Since IRAP is an 213 aminopeptidase, we wondered if the enzymatic activity of IRAP was involved in the control 214 of TLR9 activation. To investigate this possibility, we tested the effect of an inactive form of IRAP on TLR9 activation. IRAP, similar to all M1 aminopeptidases, has a Zn²⁺ atom in the 215 active site ²⁷ and contains the canonical zinc-binding amino acid motif HELAH, which is 216 217 essential for the enzymatic activity. A form of IRAP in which the HELAH sequence was 218 changed into HALAH (E465A substitution) co-localized, like the wild-type protein, with syntaxin 6 (Stx6), a SNARE of IRAP⁺ vesicles 16,17 (Fig. 4a). Both the wt and mutated form 219 220 of IRAP were well expressed, as shown by immunoblotting with anti-IRAP antibodies (Fig. 221 4b) but the mutated form was enzymatically inactive (Fig. 4c). When we reconstituted IRAP-222 deficient BM-DCs with wild-type IRAP (Fig. 4d) or enzymatically inactive IRAP (Fig. 4e), 223 pro-inflammatory cytokine production upon CpG stimulation was similar to wt cells. These 224 results demonstrated that the enzymatic activity of IRAP is not involved in the control of 225 TLR9 activation.

227 CpG and TLR9 are cargos of IRAP vesicles

228 Since IRAP enzymatic activity was not involved in TLR9 activation, we wondered if IRAP 229 could interfere directly with TLR9 or CpG trafficking. Analysis of CpG-FITC by confocal 230 microscopy demonstrated that CpG massively colocalized with IRAP. After 20 min of endocytosis, half of the internalized CpG was found in IRAP vesicles, where it was retained 231 232 for at least 1 h (Fig. 5a). Concomitant with IRAP-CpG colocalization, we observed a 233 significant increase of co-localization between IRAP and TLR9-GFP (Fig. 5b). While only 234 20% of TLR9 was found in IRAP vesicles early after CpG stimulation, the TLR9 ligand was a 235 major and persistent cargo of IRAP endosomes.

236 Since both TLR9 and its ligand trafficked via IRAP vesicles, we wondered if IRAP vesicles 237 overlap with VAMP3, a marker of an endosomal population through which TLR9 traffics towards lysosomes¹⁵. IRAP, as well as the small GTPase Rab14 and the Q-SNARE Stx6, two 238 others markers of IRAP⁺ vesicles in DCs^{16,17} coincided with VAMP3 endosomes 239 (Supplementary Fig. 3). These results suggest that IRAP vesicles are a new intermediate 240 241 compartment between early endosomes and the final destination of TLR9, which is the 242 LAMP⁺ lysosome. This conclusion is also supported by the absence of colocalization between IRAP and LAMP that we have shown previously ^{16,17}. 243

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245 IRAP absence increases the susceptibility of TLR9 to lysosomal processing

Since CpG and TLR9 are cargos of IRAP vesicles, we wondered if IRAP deletion could 246 247 change the trafficking of CpG and TLR9. Analysis of CpG-FITC trafficking demonstrated that the proportion of TLR9 ligand transported to LAMP⁺ vesicles was significantly higher in 248 249 IRAP-deficient cells than in wt cells, an effect that was obvious at early time points (Fig. 6a). 250 The accelerated transport to lysosomes of CpG, in IRAP-deficient DCs, was potentially 251 correlated with a change in the intracellular distribution of TLR9-GFP, which was found in 252 lysosomes even in the absence of CpG stimulation (Fig. 6b). The presence of TLR9 in the 253 LAMP⁺ compartment correlates with proteolytic generation of a highly active C-terminal fragment of the receptor in DCs and macrophages ^{7,8,11,12,28}. In agreement with the lysosomal 254 255 localization of TLR9 in unstimulated IRAP-deficient cells, we found that in IRAP-deficient, 256 but not in wt primary mouse embryonic fibroblasts transfected with TLR9-GFP and 257 UNC93B-Cherry, the majority of immunoprecipitated TLR9-GFP corresponded to its 258 processed form (Fig. 6c). As expected from the functional assays of TLR stimulation (Fig. 259 1a-b), TLR3 did not colocalize with IRAP and intracellular localization of TLR3 was not

affected by IRAP deletion (Supplementary Fig. 4). Thus, in the absence of IRAP, TLR9, but
 not TLR3, was targeted to lysosomes without cell stimulation.

262 To ensure that the lysosomal expression of TLR9 in IRAP-deficient cells was not the 263 consequence of TLR9-GFP expression by nucleofection, we investigated the localization of 264 endogenous TLR9. Since the only antibody that is specific for TLR9 (Fig. 6d) was not 265 sensitive enough to detect TLR9 in whole cell lysate, we isolated early and late phagosomes 266 from wt and IRAP-deficient DCs. While in the absence of CpG, TLR9 was not recruited to 267 phagosomes in wt cells, we detected the active C-terminal form of TLR9 in IRAP-deficient 268 late phagosomes. Thus, similar to the TLR9-GFP fusion, endogenous TLR9 was recruited to 269 phago-lysosomes without CpG treatment in the absence of IRAP. Intriguingly, when the cells 270 were stimulated with CpG, TLR9 recruitment to early and late phagosomes was identical 271 between wt and IRAP-deficient cells (Fig. 6e). However, despite the similar recruitment to 272 phago-lysosomes of endogenous TLR9 in both wt and IRAP-deficient cells upon CpG 273 treatment, TLR9 signaling was exacerbated only in IRAP-deficient cells. This apparent 274 contradiction can be explained by an increased accessibility of TLR9 to CpG in IRAP-275 deficient cells, suggested by the accelerated translocation of internalized CpG-FITC to 276 lysosomes (Fig. 6a).

277

278 IRAP deletion reduces CpG and TLR9 retention in early endosomes

279 Since the consequences of IRAP on TLR9 hyper-activation could come from properties of 280 IRAP on early endosome trafficking, we wondered if the early steps of CpG and TLR9 281 trafficking were modified by IRAP depletion. To analyze this, we used the early endosomal 282 antigen, EEA1, a tethering factor known to be involved in homotypic and heterotypic fusion 283 events of early endosomes. EEA1 recruitment to endosome is a mandatory step in endosome 284 maturation to lysosome since inhibition of EEA1 activity blocks phagosome maturation²⁹. 285 Nevertheless, a fraction of EEA1⁺ vesicles display a slow maturation rate and do not fuse rapidly to late endosomes ³⁰. To visualize TLR9 and CpG trafficking in EEA1⁺ vesicles, we 286 used BM-DCs from TLR9-GFP transgenic mice pulsed with CpG-biotin (Fig. 7a) in which 287 288 IRAP was depleted by lentiviral shRNA (shIRAP) delivery (Fig. 7d). Colocalization analysis 289 between TLR9-GFP and EEA1 showed that in IRAP-depleted cells, and not in control cells 290 (shNT), TLR9 displayed a vesicular staining in subdomains of EEA1 endosomes in the 291 absence of CpG (Fig. 7a, upper panels). Following CpG incubation, the trafficking of CpG 292 was also affected by IRAP depletion. While in control cells, 25% of internalized CpG 293 remained in EEA1 endosomes for 2 h, in IRAP-depleted cells, CpG was rapidly transferred

from EEA1⁺ vesicles to TLR9⁺ vesicles, as illustrated by the white arrow in the **Fig. 7a**, middle panel. As a consequence of the rapid transfer to TLR9⁺ vesicles in IRAP-depleted cells, the colocalization between CpG and TLR9 was 3 times higher in comparison to control cells (**Fig. 7b**). This enhanced localization of CpG in TLR9 positive vesicles in cells lacking IRAP was not the consequence of an increased up-take of CpG by IRAP-depleted cells (**Fig. 7c**).

Thus, IRAP depletion facilitated not only TLR9 processing but also TLR9 access to itsligand.

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303 IRAP interaction with the FHOD4 formin provides a molecular mechanism for the304 control of TLR9 activation

305 Altogether, these results highlighted a role for IRAP in TLR9 and CpG retention in EEA1⁺ 306 endosomes that was independent on its enzymatic activity. We reasoned that the effect of 307 IRAP on TLR9 activation could be mediated by interactions with proteins that play roles in 308 vesicular trafficking. Two cytoskeleton factors have been previously identified to interact with the cytosolic domain of IRAP: vimentin²⁰ and FHOD1 (formin homology domain-309 containing proteins; synonym: FHOS-formin homologue overexpressed in the spleen)²¹. 310 311 Vimentin forms intermediate filaments, cytoskeleton components that are important for anchoring intracellular organelles ³¹. FHOD formins are proteins essential for actin 312 313 polymerization and are involved in anchoring vesicles to the actin cytoskeleton ³². Thus, 314 vimentin and formins could play a role in the control of IRAP-mediated trafficking of TLR9. 315 Duolink and co-immunoprecipitation experiments in fibroblasts and in DCs failed to show a 316 robust interaction between IRAP and vimentin (data not shown), which implies that the IRAP-vimentin interaction that has been demonstrated in adipocytes ²⁰ might be specific to 317 318 that cell type.

319 To investigate the FHOD1-IRAP interaction in DCs, we first investigated the expression of FHOD1 in different cell types as reported in the gene expression database of the ImmGen ³³ 320 321 consortium (Fig. 8a). The mRNA expression data recovered from ImmGen 322 (https://www.immgen.org/Databrowserpage.swf) showed that while FHOD1 expression is 323 restricted to a subset of macrophages, FHOD4, a formin from the same family, has a wider 324 distribution and higher expression levels in monocytes and DCs. As a consequence, we tested 325 the interaction between IRAP and FHOD4. Endogenous FHOD4, as well as a FHOD4-GFP 326 fusion protein interacted with IRAP as demonstrated by reciprocal co-immunoprecipitations 327 (Fig. 8b and Supplementary Fig. 5a) and by Duolink, an alternative method used to

328 investigate protein interaction in situ²⁴ (Fig. 8c and Supplementary Fig. 5b). Confocal

329 microscopy showed that FHOD4 could be recruited to IRAP⁺ vesicles, together with a

330 vesicular actin coat labeled by phalloidin (Fig. 8d). These results suggested that FHOD4

331 could anchor IRAP⁺ vesicles to the actin cytoskeleton.

332 To investigate if FHOD4-IRAP interaction was involved in TLR9 activation in DCs, we 333 knocked-down FHOD4 expression using lentiviral transduction of shRNA in BM-DCs from TLR9-GFP transgenic mice. FHOD4 was reproducibly reduced by 95% (± 10%) in the cells 334 335 transduced with two shRNA (17 and 20) targeting FHOD4 (Fig. 8e). In the absence of 336 FHOD4 and CpG stimulation, 40% (± 5%) of the endogenous TLR9-GFP was found in the 337 cleaved form (Fig. 8f). In agreement with the increased basal processing of TLR9-GFP, the 338 GFP-fused TLR9 was found in lysosomes in FHOD4 depleted cells (Fig. 8g). Thus, TLR9 339 trafficking and processing were affected by FHOD4 depletion, like in the case of IRAP 340 deletion.

341 Considering the impact of FHOD4 depletion on TLR9 localization, we expected to have an 342 increased TLR9-driven inflammatory response in FHOD4 depleted BM-DCs. When 343 incubated with CpG, FHOD4 depleted cells (wt-shFHOD4) secreted significantly more pro-344 inflammatory cytokines than the cells transduced with a non-targeting shRNA (wt-shNT) 345 (Fig. 8h and Supplementary Fig. 6a). Depletion of FHOD1 did not affected TLR9-GFP 346 localization or activation (Supplementary Fig. 6c, d), consistent with its very low levels of 347 expression in BMDCs (Supplementary Fig. 6b). These results suggest that IRAP anchors 348 endosomal vesicles to the actin cytoskeleton through its specific interaction with FHOD4, 349 slowing their transport to lysosomes. A major effect of these molecular interactions is 350 ensuring a limited interaction between TLR9 and its ligand, which prevents hyper-351 inflammation.

352

354

353 DISSCUSSION

The capacity of intracellular TLRs to recognize host nucleic acids is a risk for auto-immunity. 355 For example, inappropriate activation of endosomal TLRs by self DNA has a major role in 356 inflammation that occurs in systemic lupus erythematous, arthritis and psoriasis ³⁴. To avoid 357 hyper-activation of TLRs, their encounter with the ligands and ability to signal must be tightly 358 regulated. First, exposure to ligands is restricted through the retention of TLRs in the ER in 359 basal conditions ³⁵ and second, downstream signaling depends on the partial proteolysis of 360 TLRs that occurs in the endo-lysosomal compartment ^{5,7,8,12,36}. Although these two steps 361 apply to all intracellular TLRs, recent in-depth studies show that the trafficking routes used by 362

distinct endosomal TLRs to reach the endocytic pathway are different ^{5,6}. TLR9, like other TLRs, exits ER by interacting with Unc93b ³⁵. Unlike other TLRs, the TLR9-Unc93b complex reaches the cell surface and is later internalized into a poorly characterized endosomal compartment through AP-2 mediated endocytosis ⁶.

367 In this study, we identified IRAP as a regulator of CpG and TLR9 intracellular trafficking and 368 in vivo activation of TLR9. IRAP deficiency led to rapid transport of internalized CpG to lysosomes and to TLR9 localization in lysosomes, where TLR9 is cleaved into its active C-ter 369 370 form in the absence of CpG ligand. We observed this aberrant TLR9 trafficking and 371 processing not only for TLR9-GFP, but also for endogenous TLR9 detected with anti-TLR9 372 antibodies. Lysosomal localization of TLR9 in IRAP-deficient cells might be a consequence 373 of accelerated trafficking of its ligand, which normally is retained in IRAP⁺ vesicles for a long 374 time. The aberrant trafficking of both the ligand and the receptor led to an uncontrolled inflammatory response to TLR9 ligands, which culminated with animal death following an 375 infection with P. aeruginosa, a bacterium sensed by TLR9²⁶. Altogether, our results show 376 that IRAP is required to avoid excessive TLR9-driven inflammatory responses. In view of 377 378 these results, it is conceivable that IRAP plays a role in human autoimmune pathologies 379 through its effects on TLR9 signaling. The recent identification of a genetic association 380 between psoriasis, one of the autoimmune disorders implicating TLR9 activation, and a 381 nonsense mutation in the LNPEP gene encoding IRAP is consistent with this hypothesis²².

382 The new role of IRAP and our co-localization experiments define an endosomal compartment 383 that is described by the presence of Rab14 and Stx6 (Supplementary Fig. 7) and partially overlaps with VAMP3⁺ and EEA1⁺ vesicles. VAMP3 and TLR9 have been shown to co-384 385 localize in an intermediate step of the route that TLR9 follows towards lysosomes and which depends on the AP-3 adaptor ¹⁵. Our data suggest that IRAP vesicles delay the trafficking of 386 CpG and TLR9 from EEA1⁺ endosomes to lysosomes, with important functional 387 388 consequences. To understand how IRAP could mechanistically affect the dynamics of the 389 early endosomal compartment in which CpG and TLR9 are retained, we screen for 390 cytoskeletal proteins that might interact with IRAP and could interfere with endosomal motility. Indeed, considering that the cytosolic tail of IRAP was shown to interact with two 391 cytoskeleton components, an actin nucleation factor, the formin FHOD1²¹ and the 392 intermediate filament vimentin²⁰, we hypothesized that these interactions ensure the 393 394 anchoring of IRAP and the associated TLR9 endosomes to cytoskeleton. Whereas the 395 interaction of IRAP with vimentin was not detectable in DCs (experiments not shown), we 396 found that IRAP binds to FHOD4 formin.

397 Formins are major actin nucleation factors that drive the assembly of actin monomers into filamentous structures and remain associated with the barbed end during filament elongation 398 399 ³⁷. A knock-down of FHOD4 had effects similar to IRAP deletion on TLR9 trafficking and the cellular response to CpG. These results suggest that by promoting actin assembly on 400 401 endosomes, FHOD4 prevents the transfer of endosomes to microtubules, delaying their retrograde transport towards lysosomes, as reported for the formin mDia1³⁸. Actin 402 403 polymerization around the endosomal vesicles containing TLR9 ligands has been shown to be 404 also driven by the other key actin nucleation factor, Arp2/3, and to be essential in limiting TLR9 signaling ³⁹. Interestingly, both, FHOD4 and Arp2/3 are activated by the same small 405 GTPase of Rho family, Cdc42³⁷, suggesting that these two actin-remodeling factors might 406 407 cooperate in the regulation of TLR9 signaling, like they cooperate in phagocytic cup formation ⁴⁰. 408

409 The intervention of FHOD4 in interaction with IRAP for modulating TLR9 function has 410 major implications for potential links between extracellular stimuli, such as cytokines and the ability of TLR9 to respond to its ligands. It has been previously reported that TLR responses 411 can be inhibited by extracellular stimuli such as cytokines ⁴¹ or integrin ligation ^{42,43}. Since 412 Cdc42 activation occurs downstream integrin, receptor tyrosine kinase or G-protein-coupled 413 receptors signaling ⁴⁴, it could affect actin polymerization and the anchoring of CpG⁺/TLR9⁺ 414 vesicles by IRAP. Thus, the anchoring of $CpG^+/TLR9^+$ vesicles to actin cytoskeleton could be 415 416 essential in regulating TLR9 dependent cellular responses to the environment.

417

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428 Figure Legends

429 Figure 1. IRAP deletion increases TLR9 response

430 (a) Wt and IRAP-deficient (ko) BM-DCs were stimulated with different TLR ligands for 16 h 431 and the secretion of IL-6, IL-12(p40) and TNF-\alpha in supernatants was measured by ELISA (n=10 experiments, mean \pm SEM, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01). (b) Wt and ko BM-DCs were 432 433 incubated for 16 h with TLR ligands and IFN- β was measured by ELISA (n=3 experiments, 434 **p<0.01). (c-d) Splenic cDCs (c) or pDCs (d) from wt and ko mice were isolated by cell 435 sorting (c) or anti-PDCA-1 magnetic beads (d), incubated overnight with CpG-B or CpG-A 436 and cytokine secretion was measured by ELISA (n=2 experiments, **p<0.001). (e) Wt and ko 437 BM-DCs were incubated for 3 h with CpG-B or LPS and mRNA for TNF- α , IL-6 and IL-12 was quantified by RT-PCR using as reporters GAPDH and HPRT1. NS= non-stimulated 438 cells. (n= 4 experiments, data are represented as means \pm SEM, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01). (f) 439 440 mRNAs for IL-6 and IL-12 from wt and ko splenic pDCs, stimulated or not (NS) with CpG-441 B, were measured by RT-PCR using the same reporter genes as in e (n= 3 experiments, means 442 \pm SEM, * p<0.05). See also Supplementary Fig. 1.

443

444 Figure 2. Increased TLR9 signaling in IRAP-deficient DCs

445 PLA for detection of MyD88/NF- κ B (a) or MyD88/IRF7 (b) proximity was performed with specific antibodies against MyD88, NF-KB and IRF7. The graphs show the quantification of 446 447 MyD88 interaction with NF- κ B (a) or IRF7 (b) by PLA. A minimum of 30 cells was analyzed in each condition. (n=3 experiments, means ± SD, ** p<0.01, ***p<0.001). 448 449 Statistical analysis was performed with Student t test. (c-d) Wt or ko BMDCs were incubated 450 with TLR ligands (CpG-B: 10 µg/ml, LPS: 100 ng/ml) for 10, 20, 30, 40, 60 and 120 minutes. 451 Cells lysates were assessed for ERK (c) and I-KB- α (d) phosphorylation by Western Blot and 452 ELISA. Total ERK (t-ERK) and I-KB- α (t-I-KB- α) were also measured. Phosphorylated 453 ERK (p-ERK) proteins were quantified and normalized over total ERK (t-ERK) using IMAGE J software. (c, d, n= 3 experiments, means ± SEM, * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** 454 455 p<0.001, **** p<0.0001).

456

Figure 3. IRAP-deficient mice display a hyper-inflammatory phenotype driven by TLR9 activation

- 459 (a) IL-6 production was measured in serum of wt or IRAP-deficient (ko) mice 2 h after i.v.
- 460 injection of CpG-B (left panel) or LPS (right panel) (n=9 animals, mean ± SEM, ** p<0.01).

461 (b) Wt and ko mice (n=9-11 in each group), were inoculated intranasally with *P. Aeruginosa* at 10⁶ cfu/mouse. Animal survival was determined up to 7 days post-infection (n=3 462 independent experiments, * p<0.05). (c) Broncho-alveolar lavage (BAL) fluid levels of KC, 463 464 IL-6, TNF- α and IL-1 β in wt and ko mice 24 h after intranasal inoculation of *P. Aeruginosa* (10^6 cfu/mice) (n=9 animals, 3 independent experiments, mean ± SEM * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, 465 *** p<0.001). (d) TNF- α , KC and IL-6 secretion in supernatants of non-stimulated (NS), 466 467 CpG-B- or LPS-stimulated wt or ko alveolar macrophages (2 independent experiments, mean ± SEM, * p<0.05, *** p<0.001. (e) Twenty-four hours post-infection, bacterial load was 468 469 determined in lungs from wt and ko mice. (n=9 animals; graphs show mean \pm SEM of 2 470 independent experiments). See also Supplementary Fig. 2.

471

472 Figure 4. IRAP enzymatic activity is not involved in TLR9 activation

473 (a) IRAP-deficient (ko) BM-DCs reconstituted with active or inactive IRAP-HA by 474 nucleofection were seeded on fibronectin-coated slides and stained with anti-Stx6 and anti-475 HA specific antibodies. The graph shows the colocalization between IRAP and Stx6 (n=10 476 cells, two experiments). (b) IRAP-deficient fibroblasts were transfected by electroporation 477 with active or inactive IRAP and 36 h later, IRAP expression was analyzed by 478 immunoblotting with anti-IRAP antibodies. (c) IRAP was immunoprecipitated with anti-479 IRAP antibodies from the fibroblasts transfected as in (b) and the aminopeptidase activity was 480 tested by incubation of the beads with the colorimetric substrate Leu-AMC (2 independent 481 experiments). (d-e) IRAP-deficient BM-DCs reconstituted with active (d) or inactive (e) 482 IRAP were stimulated with TLR ligands for 16 h and IL-6 secretion was measured by ELISA (three (d) or two (e) independent experiments, mean \pm SEM, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001). 483

484

485 Figure 5. CpG and TLR9 are cargos of IRAP endosomes

(a) Wt BM-DCs were pulsed for 20 minutes with CpG-FITC, chased at 37°C for the indicated
time-points, washed in PBS, fixed and stained with anti-IRAP and anti-FITC specific
antibodies. (b) Wt BM-DCs were transfected with TLR9-GFP by nucleofection. Two days
later, the cells were stimulated or not with CpG-B for 20 min, fixed and stained with antiIRAP specific antibodies. See also Supplementary Fig. 3.

491

492 Figure 6. IRAP absence increases the susceptibility of TLR9 to lysosomal processing

493 (a) Wt and IRAP-deficient BM-DCs were pulsed for 20 minutes with CpG-FITC, chased at

494 37°C for the indicated time-points, washed in PBS, fixed and stained with anti-LAMP1 and anti-FITC specific antibodies (2 experiments, n=6 cells, *p<0.05, ***p<0.001). (b) IRAP-495 deficient and wt BM-DCs were transfected with TLR9-GFP by nucleofection and 48 h later 496 497 stimulated or not with CpG-B for 20 or 120 min. The cells were fixed and stained with 498 specific antibodies for LAMP1 (2 experiments, n=10 cells, p<0.05, p<0.01). (c) Wt and IRAP-deficient fibroblasts expressing TLR9-GFP and Unc93b-Cherry were lysed in 1% NP-499 500 40 and TLR9-GFP was immunoprecipitated with anti-GFP antibodies and analyzed by anti-501 GFP immunoblot. One experiment out of three is shown. The graph represents the 502 quantification of GFP immunoblots from the three independent experiments. Phagosomes from wt, ko (e) and tlr9^{-/-} (TLR9-ko, d) BMDCs unstimulated or stimulated with CpG-B (10 503 504 µg/ml) were magnetically purified after 20 min or 120 min. Proteins expressed in phagosomes 505 (10 µg) were resolved by SDS-PAGE and endogenous TLR9 and LAMP1 proteins were 506 visualized by immunoblot. Data are representative of two experiments.

507

508 Figure 7. IRAP deletion reduces CpG and TLR9 retention in early endosomes

509 BM-DCs from TLR9-GFP transgenic mice were transduced with a lentivirus coding for a 510 shRNA against IRAP (shIRAP) or a non-targeting shRNA (shNT). (a) The cells were pulsed 511 or not with Biotinylated-CpG, washed and chased for the indicated time points. After fixation, 512 the cells were stained with anti-EEA1 specific antibodies. (b) The graphs represent the 513 percentage of colocalization between the proteins visualized in (a) (2 experiments, n=6 cells, *p<0.05, **p<0.01, ***p<0.001 ****p<0.0001). (c) CpG-FITC up-take by wt and IRAP-514 515 deficient BM-DCs was measured by flow cytometry. (d) The efficiency of IRAP knockdown was analyzed by immunoblotting, using anti-IRAP antibodies and anti α -Tubulin antibodies 516 517 for the loading control.

518

519 Figure 8. IRAP interaction with the FHOD family of formins controls TLR9 activation

(a) *IRAP (encoded by Lnpep gene)*, *FHOD1*, *FHOD4* and *TLR9* mRNA expression data were
recovered from immgen (<u>https://www.immgen.org/Databrowserpage.swf</u>) for pDCs
(pDCs_8+_sp sub-type), Monocytes (Mo_C6+_II+_BI type) and Macrophages (MF_RP_Sp
type). (b) Endogenous IRAP and FHOD4 were immunoprecipitated with antibodies antiIRAP and anti-FHOD4 respectively and the precipitates were split in two and analyzed by
immunoblot as indicated. (c) In situ IRAP/FHOD4 interaction was detected by Duolink assay
in wt and IRAP-deficient (ko) BM-DCs using antibodies against IRAP and FHOD4 (2)

527 independent experiments, 10 cells acquired). (d) Wt fibroblasts expressing FHOD4-GFP were fixed and stained with phalloidin and anti-IRAP antibodies. 40% (+/-5) of IRAP colocalized 528 529 with FHOD4 (n=5 cells, 2 independent experiments). (e-g) BM-DCs from TLR9-GFP 530 transgenic mice were transduced with two lentiviruses coding for shRNAs against FHOD4 531 (shFHOD4 17 and shFHOD4 20) or a non-targeting shRNA (shNT). (e) The efficiency of 532 FHOD4 knock-down was analyzed by immunoblotting using anti FHOD4 antibodies. (f) 533 Endogenous TLR9-GFP processing in cells transduced with shNT or shFHOD4 (20) was 534 analyzed by immunoblot with anti-GFP antibodies. Control corresponds to untransduced wt 535 BMDCs. (g) Endogenous TLR9-GFP localization in steady state conditions was analyzed by 536 confocal microscopy using an anti-LAMP1 antibody. The graph represents the quantification of TLR9-GFP/LAMP1 colocalization (2 experiments, n=10 cells, ***p<0.001). (h) Wt and ko 537 538 BMDCs were transduced with shNT (non-targeting) and shFHOD4 (20) lentiviruses and 539 stimulated with different TLR ligands for 6 h. The secretion of IL-12(p40) in supernatants 540 was measured by ELISA (n=3 experiments, mean \pm SEM, **p<0.01, *p<0.05). See also 541 Supplementary Fig. 5-6.

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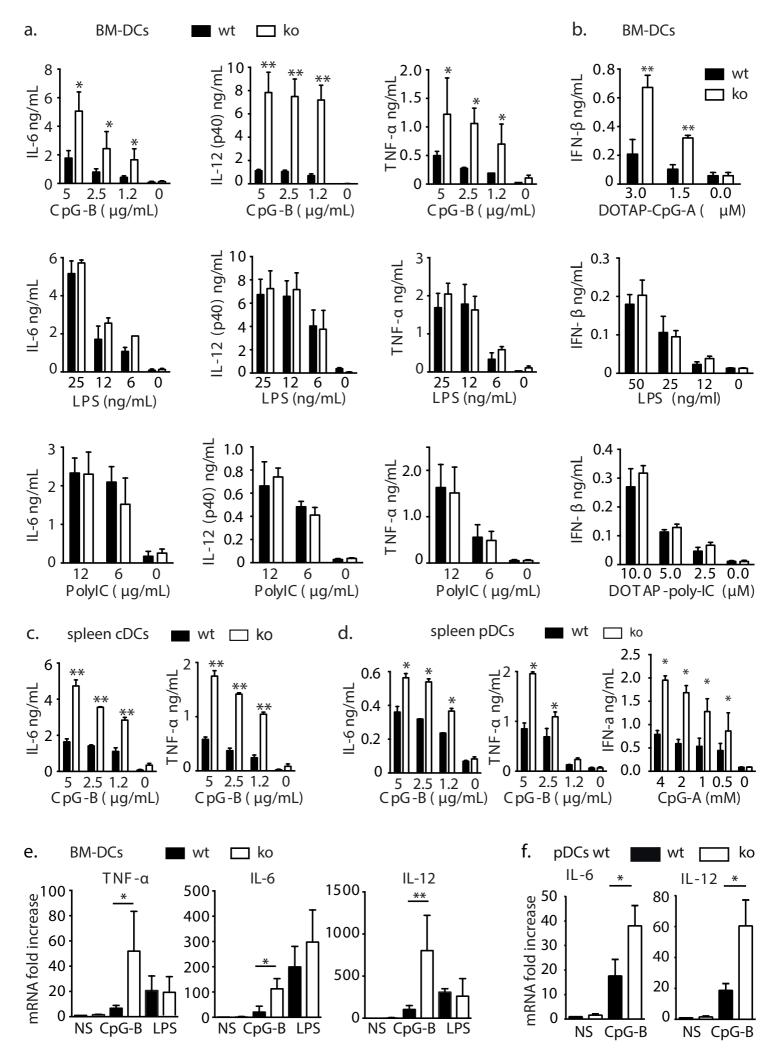
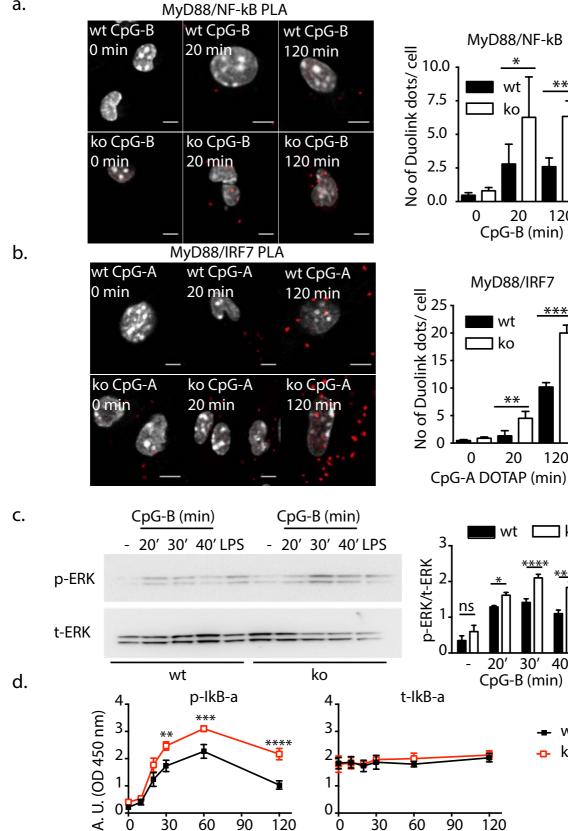
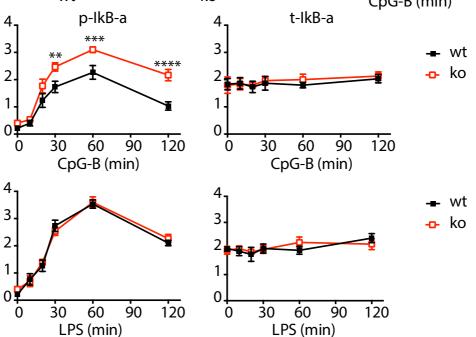


Figure 1 Babdor et al.



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Figure 2. Babdor et al.



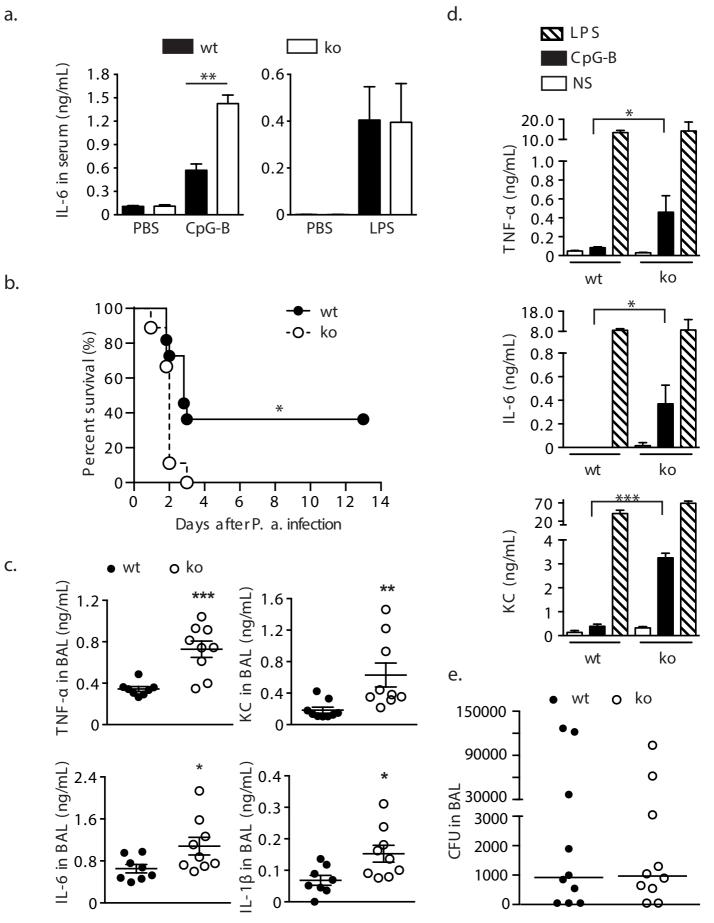


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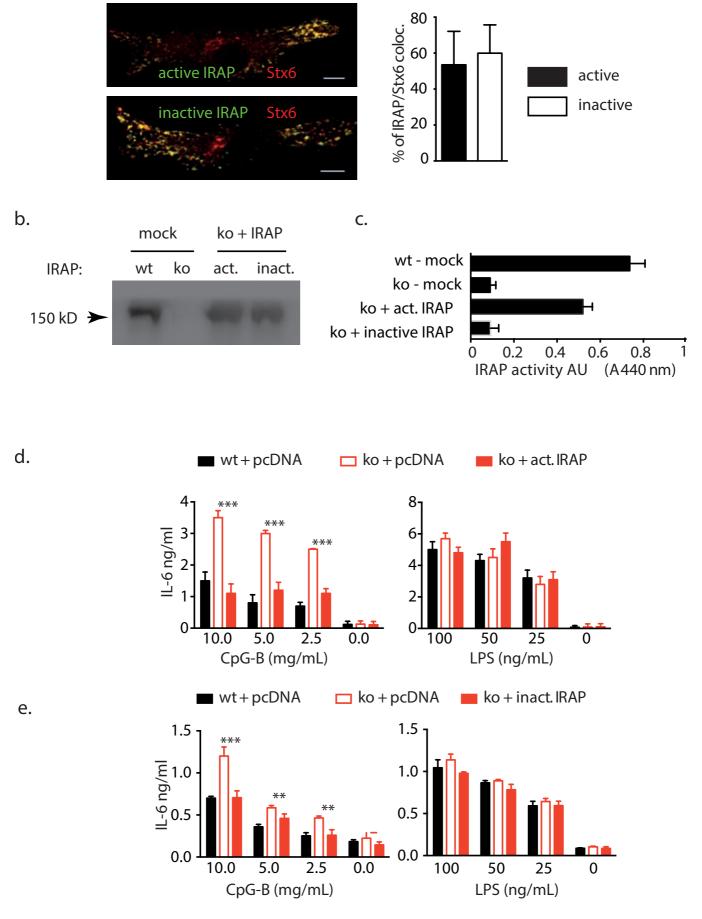
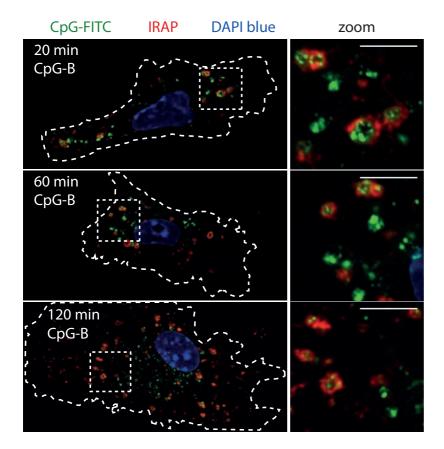
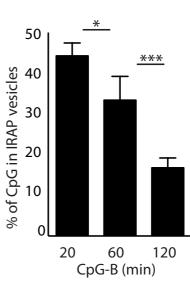
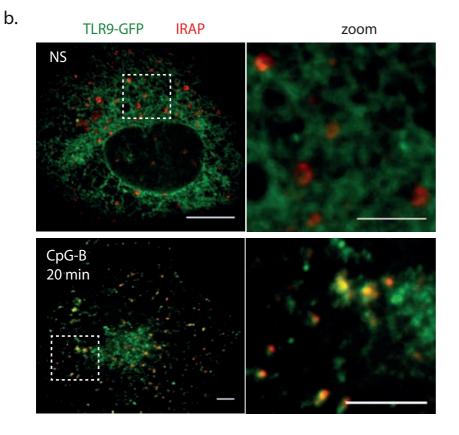


Figure 4. Babdor et al







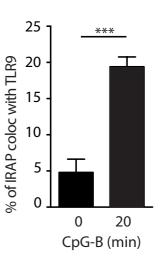
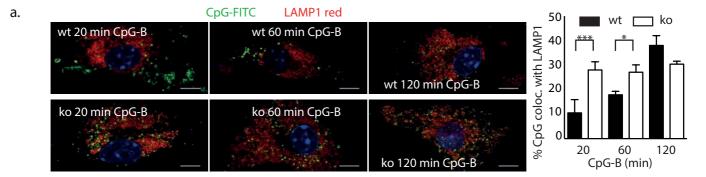
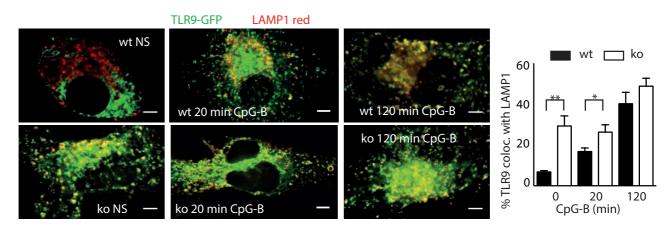


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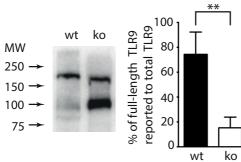


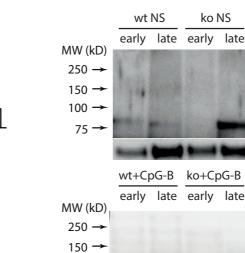
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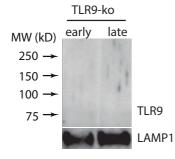


Figure 6_ Babdor et al.

TLR9-GFP tg

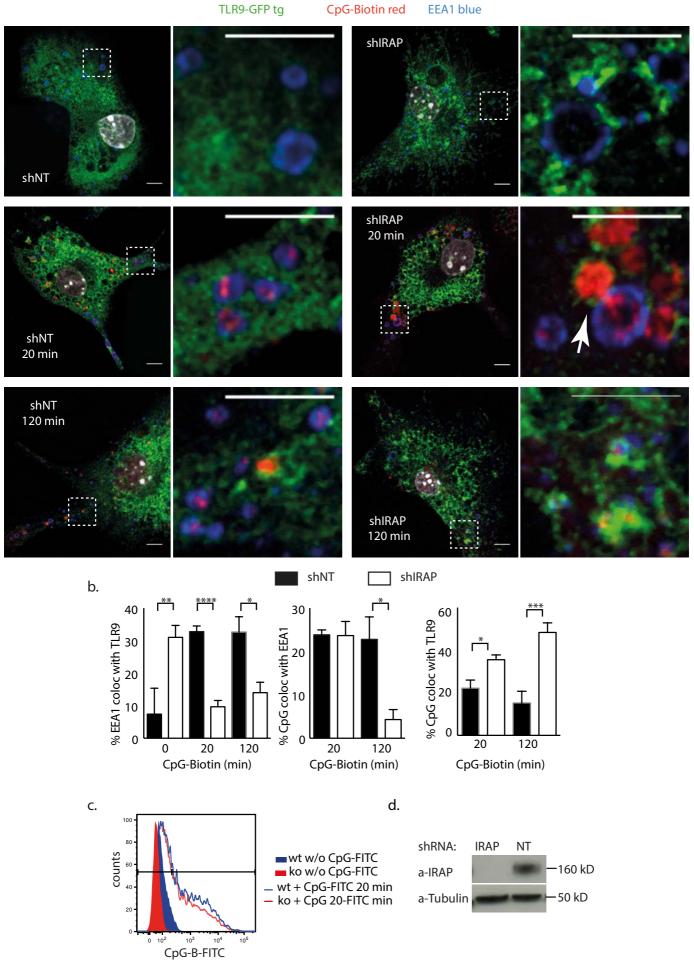
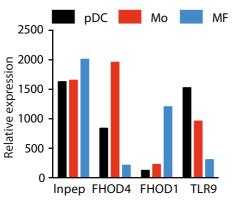
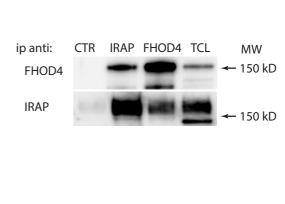


Figure 7 Babdor et al.



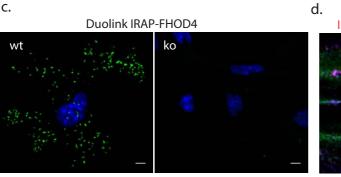


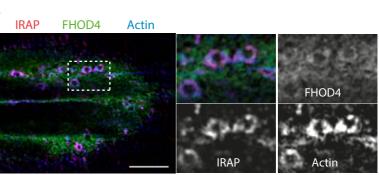
b.

f.

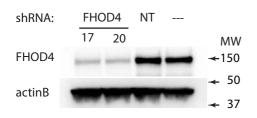
c.

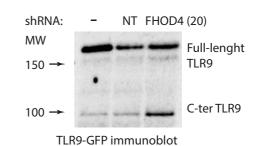
a.





e.





g.

h.

