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DOCK11 deficiency in patients with X-linked actinopathy and autoimmunity

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Charlotte Boussard (Hospital Necker-Enfants Malades, Assistance Publique-Hospitaux de Paris, INSERM, France) Laure Delage (Université Paris Cité, Institut Imagine, Laboratory of Immunogenetics of Pediatric Autoimmune Diseases, INSERM UMR 1163; F-75015 Paris, France., France) Tania Gajardo (INSERM U1163 - Imagine Institute, France) Alexandre Kauskot (INSERM, France) Maxime Batignes (Institut Imagine-INSERM-UMR-1163, France) Nicolas GOUDIN (INSERM, France) Marie-Claude Stolzenberg (U768, France) Camille Brunaud (Imagine Institute, France) Patricia Panikulam (INSERM U1163 - Imagine Institute, France) Quentin Riller (Université Paris Cité, Institut Imagine, Laboratory of Immunogenetics of Pediatric Autoimmune Diseases, INSERM UMR 1163; F-75015 Paris, France., France) Maryse Moya-Nilges (Institut Pasteur, UTechS Ultrastructural BioImaging UBI, France) Jean Solarz (INSERM, France) Christelle REPERANT (INSERM, France) Béatrice Durel (Cell Imaging Platform, Structure Fédérative de Recherche Necker, INSERM US24, CNRS UMS3633, France) Jean-Claude Bordet (Hospices civils de Lyon, France) Olivier Pellé (Université Paris Cité, Institut Imagine, Laboratory of Immunogenetics of Pediatric Autoimmune Diseases, INSERM UMR 1163; F-75015 Paris, France, France) Corinne Lebreton (Institut Imagine-INSERM-UMR-1163, France) Aude Magerus-Chatinet (INSERM, France) Vithura Pirabakaran (Université Paris Cité, Institut Imagine, Laboratory of Immunogenetics of Pediatric Autoimmune Diseases, INSERM UMR 1163; F-75015 Paris, France., France) Pablo Vargas (INSERM, France) Sébastien Dupichaud (Cell Imaging Platform, Structure Fédérative de Recherche Necker, INSERM US24, CNRS UMS3633, France) Marie Jeanpierre (Institut Imagine-INSERM-UMR-1163, France) Angélique Vinit (Sorbonne Université, France) Mohammed Zarhrate (Imagine Institute,) Cécile Masson (Bioinformatics Platform, Imagine Institute, INSERM UMR1163, Paris Cité University, Paris, France., France) Nathalie Aladjidi (Bordeaux University Hospital / CEREVANCE, France) Peter Arkwright (University of Manchester, United Kingdom) Brigitte Bader-Meunier (AP-HP5, France) Sandrine Baron Joly (Department of Pediatrics, Nîmes University Hospital, France) Joy Benadiba (Nice University Hospital, France) Elise Bernard (Departement of General Pediatrics, Centre hospitalier de Mayotte, France) Dominique Berrebi (Hopital Robert Debré, APHP,) Christine Bodemer (Hôpital Necker-Enfants Malades, France) Martin CASTELLE (Hôpital Universitaire Necker Enfants Malades, France) Fabienne Charbit-Henrion (Department of Dermatology, referral Center for Genodermatoses (MAGEC), Assistance Publique-Hopitaux de Paris, Hôpital Necker-Enfants Malades, F-75015, Paris, France., France) Marwa Chbihi (INSERM U976 HIPI, équipe INSIGHT, Institut de Recherche Saint Louis, Université Paris Cité, Paris, France, France) Agathe Debray (Departement of General Pediatrics and Infectious Diseases, Hôpital Trousseau, Assistance Publique-Hôpitaux de Paris, France) Philippe Drabent (Department of Anatomopathology, Assistance Publique-Hopitaux de Paris, Hôpital Necker-Enfants Malades, France) Sylvie Fraitag (Hôpital Necker-Enfants Malades, France) Miguel Hié (APHP, CHU la Pitié-Salpêtrière, France) Judith Landman-Parker (Armand-Trousseau Sorbonne University Hospital, AP-HP, France) Ludovic Lhermitte (Assistance Publique-Hôpitaux de Paris (AP-HP), Hôpital Necker Enfants-Malades, Paris, France, France) Despina Moshous (Hôpital Necker-Enfants Malades, France) Pierre Rohrlich (CHU de Nice, France) Frank Ruemmele (Department of Pediatric Gastroenterology, Assistance Publique-Hopitaux de Paris, Hôpital Necker-Enfants Malades, France) Anne Welfringer-Morin (Department of Dermatology, referral Center for Genodermatoses (MAGEC), Assistance Publique-Hopitaux de Paris, Hôpital Necker-Enfants Malades, France) Maud Tusseau (The International Center of Research in Infectiology, Lyon University, INSERM U1111, CNRS UMR 5308, ENS, UCBL, France) Alexandre Belot (HCL, INSERM, Université de Lyon,) Nadine Cerf-Bensussan (INSERM, France) Marie Roelens (Necker Hospital, France) Capucine Picard (Université de Paris, France) Bénédicte Neven (Hospital Necker-Enfants Malades, Assistance Publique-Hospitaux de Paris, INSERM, France) Alain Fischer (INSTITUT IMAGINE, France) Isabelle Callebaut (Sorbonne University, CNRS UMR7590, Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, France) Mickaël Ménager (Université Paris Cité, Institut Imagine, Laboratory of Inflammatory Responses and Transcriptomic Networks in Diseases, Atip-Avenir Team, INSERM UMR 1163; F-75015 Paris, France., France) Fernando Sepulveda (INSERM U1163 - Imagine Institute, France) Frédéric Adam (INSERM, France) Frédéric Rieux-Laucat (Institut Imagine-INSERM-UMR-1163, France)

Abstract:

Dedicator of cytokinesis (DOCK) proteins play a central role in actin cytoskeleton regulation. This is highlighted by the DOCK2 and DOCK8 deficiencies leading to actinopathies and immune deficiencies. DOCK8 and DOCK11 activate CDC42, a RHO-GTPase involved in actin cytoskeleton dynamics, among many cellular functions. The role of DOCK11 in human immune disease has been long suspected but has never been described so far. We studied eight male patients, from seven unrelated families, with hemizygous *DOCK11* missense variants leading to reduced DOCK11 expression. The patients were presenting with early-onset autoimmunity, including cytopenia, systemic lupus erythematosus, skin, and digestive manifestations. Patients' platelets exhibited abnormal ultrastructural morphology and spreading as well as impaired CDC42 activity. *In* vitro activated T cells and B lymphoblastoid cell lines (B-LCL) of patients exhibited aberrant protrusions and abnormal migration speed in confined channels concomitant with altered actin polymerization during migration. A DOCK11 knock-down recapitulated these abnormal cellular phenotypes in monocytesderived dendritic cells (MDDC) and primary activated T cells from healthy controls. Lastly, in line with the patients' autoimmune manifestations, we also observed abnormal regulatory T cells (Tregs) phenotype with profoundly reduced FOXP3 and IKZF2 expression. Moreover, we found a reduced T cell proliferation and an impaired STAT5B phosphorylation upon IL2 stimulation of the patients' lymphocytes. In conclusion, DOCK11 deficiency is a new X-linked immune-related actinopathy leading to impaired CDC42 activity and STAT5 activation, and associated with abnormal actin cytoskeleton remodeling as well as Tregs phenotype culminating in immune dysregulation and severe early-onset autoimmunity.

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Clinical trial registration information (if any):

1 **Title: DOCK11 deficiency in patients with X-linked actinopathy and autoimmunity**

2

3 **Authors:**

4 Charlotte Boussard,^{1,*} Laure Delage,^{1,*} Tania Gajardo,^{2,†} Alexandre Kauskot,^{3,†} Maxime 5 Batignes,^{4,†} Nicolas Goudin,⁵ Marie-Claude Stolzenberg,¹ Camille Brunaud,¹ Patricia 6 Panikulam,² Quentin Riller,¹ Maryse Moya-Nilges,⁶ Jean Solarz,³ Christelle Repérant,³ 7 Béatrice Durel,⁷ Jean-Claude Bordet,⁸ Olivier Pellé,^{1,9} Corinne Lebreton,¹⁰ Aude Magérus,¹ 8 Vithura Pirabakaran,¹ Pablo Vargas,¹¹ Sébastien Dupichaud,⁶ Marie Jeanpierre¹, Angélique 9 Vinit,¹² Mohammed Zarhrate,¹³ Cécile Masson,¹⁴ Nathalie Aladjidi,^{15, 16} Peter D. Arkwright,¹⁷ 10 Brigitte Bader-Meunier,^{1, 18} Sandrine Baron Joly,¹⁹ Joy Benadiba,²⁰ Elise Bernard,²¹ 11 Dominique Berrebi,²² Christine Bodemer,²³ Martin Castelle,¹⁸ Fabienne Charbit-12 Henrion,^{10,24,25} Marwa Chbihi,¹⁸ Agathe Debray,²⁶ Philippe Drabent,²⁷ Sylvie Fraitag,²⁷ 13 Miguel Hié,²⁸,Judith Landmann-Parker,²⁹ Ludovic Lhermitte,³⁰ Despina Moshous,^{18, 31, 32} 14 Pierre Rohrlich,²⁰ Frank Ruemmele,²⁴ Anne Welfringer-Morin,²³ Maud Tusseau,³³ Alexandre 15 Belot,^{33,34,35} Nadine Cerf-Bensussan,¹⁰ Marie Roelens,^{36,37} Capucine Picard,^{32,37,38} Bénédicte 16 Neven,^{1, 18} Alain Fischer,^{38, 39, 40} Isabelle Callebaut,⁴¹ Mickaël Ménager,^{4,42, ‡} Fernando E. 17 Sepulveda,^{2,‡} Frédéric Adam,^{3,‡} Frédéric Rieux-Laucat,^{1,‡}. 18 19 * Dr. Charlotte Boussard and Dr. Laure Delage contributed equally to this work. 20 † Dr. Gajardo, Dr. Kauskot, and Dr. Batignes contributed equally to this work. 21 ‡ Dr. Ménager, Dr. Sepulveda, Dr. Adam, and Dr. Rieux-Laucat share senior authorship. 22 23 **Affiliations:** 24 ¹Université Paris Cité, Institut Imagine, Laboratory of Immunogenetics of Pediatric 25 Autoimmune Diseases, INSERM UMR 1163; F-75015 Paris, France. 26 ² 27 ² Université Paris Cité, Institut Imagine, Laboratory of Molecular Basis of Altered Immune 28 Homeostasis, INSERM UMR 1163; F-75015 Paris, France. 29 30 ³INSERM, UMR S1176, Université Paris-Saclay, F- 94276 Le Kremlin-Bicêtre, France. 31 ⁴ 32 Université Paris Cité, Institut Imagine, Laboratory of Inflammatory Responses and 33 Transcriptomic Networks in Diseases, Atip-Avenir Team, INSERM UMR 1163; F-75015 34 Paris, France. 35 ⁵ Necker Bio-image Analysis Platform, Structure Fédérative de Recherche Necker, INSERM 37 US24, CNRS UMS3633, F-75015 Paris, France. 38 ⁶ Institut Pasteur, UTechS Ultrastructural BioImaging UBI, F-75015 Paris, France. 40 x ⁷ Cell Imaging Platform, Structure Fédérative de Recherche Necker, INSERM US24, CNRS 42 UMS3633, F-75015 Paris, France. 43 44

- 150 Dr Frédéric Rieux-Laucat, Institut *Imagine*, 24 Boulevard du Montparnasse, 75015, Paris,
- 151 France ; Email: frederic.rieux-laucat@inserm.fr.

152 **ABSTRACT**

153

154 Dedicator of cytokinesis (DOCK) proteins play a central role in actin cytoskeleton regulation. 155 This is highlighted by the DOCK2 and DOCK8 deficiencies leading to actinopathies and 156 immune deficiencies. DOCK8 and DOCK11 activate CDC42, a RHO-GTPase involved in 157 actin cytoskeleton dynamics, among many cellular functions. The role of DOCK11 in human 158 immune disease has been long suspected but has never been described so far. We studied 159 eight male patients, from seven unrelated families, with hemizygous *DOCK11* missense 160 variants leading to reduced DOCK11 expression. The patients were presenting with early-161 onset autoimmunity, including cytopenia, systemic lupus erythematosus, skin, and digestive 162 manifestations. Patients' platelets exhibited abnormal ultrastructural morphology and 163 spreading as well as impaired CDC42 activity. *In* vitro activated T cells and B lymphoblastoid 164 cell lines (B-LCL) of patients exhibited aberrant protrusions and abnormal migration speed in 165 confined channels concomitant with altered actin polymerization during migration. A 166 DOCK11 knock-down recapitulated these abnormal cellular phenotypes in monocytes-167 derived dendritic cells (MDDC) and primary activated T cells from healthy controls. Lastly, 168 in line with the patients' autoimmune manifestations, we also observed abnormal regulatory T 169 cells (Tregs) phenotype with profoundly reduced FOXP3 and IKZF2 expression. Moreover, 170 we found a reduced T cell proliferation and an impaired STAT5B phosphorylation upon IL2 171 stimulation of the patients' lymphocytes. In conclusion, DOCK11 deficiency is a new X-172 linked immune-related actinopathy leading to impaired CDC42 activity and STAT5 173 activation, and associated with abnormal actin cytoskeleton remodeling as well as Tregs 174 phenotype culminating in immune dysregulation and severe early-onset autoimmunity. 175

176 **Running title:** DOCK11 actinopathy associated with autoimmunity

178 **Key points:**

179 • DOCK11 deficiency is a new X-linked immune-related actinopathy.

177

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181 • DOCK11 deficiency leads to impaired CDC42 activity, abnormal actin cytoskeleton 182 remodeling, and immune dysregulation.

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184 Word count: 4096, Abstract word count: 245, Figures/Tables: 6/1, Number of references: 45.

186 **Introduction**

187 Immune-related actinopathies are inborn errors of immunity (IEIs) due to gene defects 188 impacting actin cytoskeleton remodeling. More than 20 entities are described so $far¹$.Actin 189 cytoskeleton remodeling is a dynamic and tightly regulated process crucial for cell shape 190 modifications, cell adhesion, motility, and other main cellular functions². Rho-GTPases, RAS-191 related GTP-binding proteins, such as RAC, CDC42, and RHO, are key players in the 192 intracellular actin reorganization^{3,4}. The phenotypic spectrum of *RAC2* mutations ranges from 193 granulocytes deficiency (loss-of-function mutations) to SCID with bone-marrow hypoplasia 194 (gain-of-function mutations)⁵. *De novo* mutations in *CDC42* were recently found in patients

195 presenting with Takenouchi-Kosaki syndrome, associating features such as 196 macrothrombocytopenia and developmental abnormalities, or with neo-natal cytopenia with 197 dyshematopoiesis, autoinflammation, rash and hemophagocytic lymphohistiocytosis (HLH), 198 termed NORCAH syndrome⁶. Rho-GTPases are activated by Guanine Exchange Factors 199 (GEFs), such as dedicator of cytokinesis (DOCK) family members like DOCK2 and 200 DOCK8⁷. Biallelic mutations in *DOCK2* result in early-onset invasive bacterial and severe 201 viral infections and T cell lymphopenia⁸. *DOCK8* mutations also result in severe bacterial, 202 viral, and fungal infections, as well as eczema and severe environmental allergies⁹. These 203 descriptions highlight the predominant role of DOCK protein members in immune-related 204 actinopathies¹⁰. A role of DOCK11 in human immune disease has been long suspected but 205 never described so far. Here we identified seven hemizygous mutations in *DOCK11*, a 206 member of the DOCK-D subfamily, in eight patients with early-onset autoimmunity, 207 including autoimmune cytopenia and systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE).

208 **Methods**

209 This section briefly describes the methods; further details are provided in the supplemental

210 Appendix. Before the study, all patients signed informed consents approved by the CERAPH-211 Centre (IRB: #00011928). The biological samples are part of Inserm UMR1163/Imagine 212 collection declared to the French Ministère de la recherche (CODECOH n° DC-2020-3994).

213

214 **Protein structure analysis**

215 3D structure prediction of DOCK11 protein was performed by combining information from 216 literature-described structures and AlphaFold2 predictions¹¹. The detailed method is described 217 in the supplemental appendix.

218

219 **Genetic and functional analysis**

220 Whole exome (WES) and Sanger sequencing, mass cytometry, ELISA and G-LISA, confocal 221 microscopy, migration assays, and *DOCK11* knock-down methods are detailed in the 222 supplemental appendix.

223

224 **Statistical analysis**

225 Statistical analyses were performed using GraphPad Prism6 (GraphPad, La Jolla, CA, USA). 226 Data were analyzed by one-way ANOVA followed by a post-hoc test, or unpaired non-227 parametric Mann-Whitney tests or Kruskal-Wallis' tests as indicated in the figure legends. 228 Differences were considered significant when $p < 0.05$.

229

230 **Data sharing statement**

- 231 For original data, please contact frederic.rieux-laucat $(\hat{\omega})$ inserm.fr.
- 232
- 233 **Results**
- 234
- 235 **Clinical and biological features of the cohort**
- 236 Eight male patients (7 to 29 years of age) from seven families of various ethnic origins were 237 studied. Clinical and biological data are summarized in Table 1, Table S1, and Fig. S1. 238 Detailed clinical cases are in the Supplemental appendix.
- 239 All patients presented early-onset autoimmunity at a median age of 5 years (range, 1 to 14
- 240 years). Five patients (A, C, E, F, G) had autoimmune cytopenia (Table 1). Twin patients (D1
- 241 and D2) had systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). Patient B had a severe Rheumatoid Factor
- 242 (RF) positive polyarticular juvenile arthritis and recurrent hemolytic anemia with positive
- 243 Coombs tests. In addition, patient F had an auto-inflammatory syndrome with 244 lymphoproliferation (Suppl. Appendix).
- 245 Five patients (A, C, D1, D2, F) presented with various cutaneous manifestations (detailed in
- 246 Table1, Fig.1A, and S1), and four patients (A, B, D1, F) with digestive manifestations (Table
- 247 1 and Fig. S2). None of the patients presented with recurrent or severe infections, allergies nor 248 bleeding disorders.
- 249 Among the maternal carriers, patient B's mother had metastatic melanoma and has been
- 250 treated with immunotherapy; patient C's mother died of colorectal cancer at age 52.
- 251

252 **Hemizygous deleterious mutations in** *DOCK11*

- 253 Seven different hemizygous missense variants of *DOCK11* were identified by Whole-exome 254 sequencing (WES) (Fig. 1B) in seven unrelated and non-consanguineous families. All six 255 mothers tested carried the gene variants (Fig. S3A). We assessed the expression of the mutant 256 and wild-type alleles in $CD4^+$, and $CD8^+$ T cells, B cells and monocytes in two mothers. The 257 expression of both DOCK11 alleles was similar, indicating a global random X-inactivation in 258 T and B cells as well as in monocytes (Fig S3B). These mutations were predicted to be 259 deleterious *in silico,* and five are private variants (Fig. S3A). The mutated amino-acids are 260 located in distinct domains of the DOCK11 protein (Fig 1B). Prediction of DOCK11 protein 261 3D structure allowed to apprehend mutations' potential deleterious impact (Fig. 1C-D and 262 Fig. S4) and suggests that the variants may cause abnormal protein folding or directly impact 263 DOCK11 interactions with its partners. Finally, DOCK11 expression was variably reduced in 264 lysates from patients' activated T cells (Fig. 1E).
- 265

266 *DOCK11* **mutations impair platelets functions and morphology**

- 267 Platelets play a central role in ITP and participate in the immune dysregulation in SLE 268 . pathogenesis¹². As four patients presented with immune thrombocytopenia (ITP) and two 269 patients with SLE, we investigated the impact of *DOCK11* mutations on platelet functions.
- 270 A significant decrease in the expression of DOCK11 was observed in the patients' platelets 271 compared to healthy donors (Fig. 2A).
- 272 Patients' platelet counts were normal or subnormal, except for patients A and C, who
- 273 presented mild to severe thrombocytopenia (Fig. 2B) but without glycosylation profile defect
- 274 (Fig. S5A). Platelet size was also normal for the patients, except for patient A who exhibited
- 275 macroplatelets (Fig. 2C and Fig.S5B). Moreover, electron microscopy ultrastructure analysis
- 276 revealed abnormal morphology with elongated platelets in patients D1, D2, and G, contrasting
- 277 with the discoid shape of resting platelets in healthy donors (HDs) (Fig. 2D-F).
- 278 Five, out of six patients tested, exhibited a defect of αIIbβ3 integrin activation at low 279 concentrations of thrombin and convulxin (Fig. S5C), indicating a thrombopathy. Of note, the

280 expression of the main platelet receptors, glycoprotein (GP)Ibα, GPVI and αIIbβ3 integrin 281 was normal in patients, except for patient A whose αIIbβ3 level was reduced (Fig. S5D). 282 Analysis of platelet morphologies during platelet adhesion on various matrices (Fig. 2G and 283 2H and S5E) identified discoid platelets (resting stage), platelets with filopodia (intermediate 284 morphological stage), and platelets with lamellipodia or full spreading (final morphological 285 step^{13} . All patients exhibited an abnormal frequency of platelets at the final stage, except for 286 patient D2, who exhibited more resting platelets. These results indicate that the patients' 287 platelets exhibit abnormal morphological modifications during platelet adhesion and 288 spreading. Of note, platelet functional assays were also performed for two mothers. A normal 289 integrin αIIbβ3 activation was observed after stimulation of platelets by thrombin or 290 convulxin and normal platelet morphologies distributions after adhesion (Figure S6A-B). 291 Since DOCK11 is a GEF activating $CDC42¹⁴$, CDC42 activation was evaluated by G-LISA in 292 patients' platelets upon thrombin activation (Fig. 2I). In all tested patients (A, D1, D2, F, and 293 G), platelets exhibited impaired CDC42 activity, providing a rationale for the lower frequency 294 of filopodia stage upon adhesion and suggesting that *DOCK11* mutations are loss-of-function. 295 Predominant lamellipodia or full spreading of patient platelet suggested an impact on others 296 Rho-GTPases, such as $Rh \circ A^{15}$. In two patients tested (A and F), the RhoA activity was 297 increased (Fig. S5F). This was mimicked by pharmacological treatment of healthy donors' 298 platelets with Cdc42 inhibitor. In this condition, the RhoA activity was also increased (Fig. 299 S5F). Taken together, these results indicate an imbalance in the CDC42/RHOA activity in the 300 patients' cells.

- 301
- 303

302 *DOCK11* **mutated cells present abnormal morphological features**

- 304 TCR-activated T cells from patients or HDs were spread on coverslips previously coated with 305 poly-L-lysine (PLL), used as internal control, or with anti-CD28 and anti-CD3 antibodies at 306 different concentrations (Fig. 3A). On the antibodies-coated coverslips, activated T cells 307 tended to increase their spreading area along with the concentration of anti-CD3 antibody. At 308 a mild concentration (0.1μg/mL), patients' T cells showed reduced circularity and increased 309 area, probably as a consequence of higher numbers of protrusions formed by *DOCK11* 310 mutated T cells (Fig. S7A). At a higher anti-CD3 concentration (1 μg/mL), mutated *DOCK11* 311 T cells had a larger spreading area than the healthy donors (Fig. 3A). Notably, 312 pharmacological activation of CDC42 restored cell spreading area to control levels (Fig. 3A). 313 These results were confirmed in activated T cells from HDs after *DOCK11* sh-RNA 314 inactivation (Fig. S7B).
- 315 Then, we analyzed morphologies of B-lymphoblastoid cell lines (B-LCL) after spreading on 316 anti-CD44 coated coverslips (Fig. 3B). In these conditions, some B-LCL cells from patients 317 exhibited an abnormal morphology, with numerous fine and long protrusions (Fig. 3B).
- 318 Finally, *DOCK11* sh-RNA inactivation was also performed in monocyte-derived dendritic
- 319 cells (MDDC) from healthy donors. DOCK11 expression was reduced by almost 80% at the
- 320 mRNA and protein levels (Fig. S7B). After activation and spreading, *DOCK11* inactivated
- 321 MDDC had larger and more prominent protrusions (Fig. S8A-B) and produced more IL-1ß
- 322 cytokine (Fig. S8C). Moreover, ruffles were aberrant and not comparable to the cells
- 323 transfected with the scramble sh-RNA (Fig. 3C).

324 Finally, primary skin-derived fibroblasts from patient A revealed abnormal protrusions 325 compared to healthy donor fibroblasts (Fig. S9).

- 326 Overall, our results suggest that DOCK11 deficiency impairs the morphology of several cell 327 lineages.
- 328
- 329

330 *DOCK11* **mutations impact leukocytes migration and polarization of actin cytoskeleton** 331 **under confinement.**

- 332 To confirm that *DOCK11* variants impair actin cytoskeleton dynamics in lymphocytes, we 333 next compared the spontaneous migratory capacity of activated T and B-LCL cells from HDs 334 and DOCK11 patients (A to G) under confinement (Fig. 4A).
- 335 As previously described¹⁶, human activated HD T cells presented constant trajectories with 336 few directional changes (Fig. 4B). In contrast, all patients' derived T cells were faster than 337 their HD counterpart (Fig. 4C). Of note, patient B's mother T cells had a speed migration 338 similar to healthy donors (Figure S6C). Similarly, patient-derived B-LCL had higher 339 migration speeds (Fig. S10A). To determine whether the increased speed of DOCK11- 340 deficient cells correlated with alterations in actin polymerization, we assessed the front-rear 341 distribution of actin in T cells fixed during migration in microchannels. In agreement with 342 previous work¹⁶, HD cells presented a bimodal actin-distribution, at the front and the rear of 343 the cells (Fig. 4D). In contrast, DOCK11-deficient cells accumulated more actin at the rear of 344 the cell (i.e., reduced front/rear actin ratio) in tested patients, consistent with the increased
- 345 speed of these cells (Fig. 4C-D).
- 346 Mechanistically, the motility of activated T cells in microchannels depends on the balance in

347 actin polymerization at the front (reflecting CDC42 activity) and rear (reflecting RHOA 348 activity) of the cell¹⁷. These results were also observed in activated T cells from HDs after 349 *DOCK11* sh-RNA inactivation (Fig. S10C).

- 350 Considering that DOCK11 has been associated with CDC42 activation $7,14$, we hypothesized 351 that the DOCK11 defects could reduce the activity of actin nucleators at the leading edge, 352 which would displace the balance of actin polymerization and increase polymerization at the 353 rear of the cells (thus increasing their speed). To test this hypothesis, HD T cells were treated 354 with a pharmacological RAC1/CDC42 inhibitor. This treatment increased the speed of control 355 T cells and impaired the front-rear ratio of actin polarization, recapitulating the alterations 356 displayed by the DOCK11-deficient cells (Fig. 4E, figure S10D). Altogether our results 357 suggest that DOCK11 is a critical regulator of the actin cytoskeleton dynamics and leukocytes
- 358 migration under confinement.
- 359

360 **DOCK11 deficiency results in abnormal Tregs phenotype and STAT5B activation in** 361 **lymphocytes.**

362 We next analyzed the impact of DOCK11 deficiency on the immune phenotype and some 363 immune functions. Flow cytometry immunophenotyping revealed variable alterations of 364 circulating immunoglobulins and B cell subsets, especially increased frequencies of $CD21_{low}$ 365 and transitional B cells (Table 1 and Sup. Table1). Elevated concentrations of APRIL and 366 BAFF were found in plasma patients (Fig. S11). Elevated plasma concentrations of 367 inflammatory cytokines were also observed in most patients (Fig. S11). Mass cytometry 368 immunophenotyping on whole blood did not reveal major alterations of cell subsets except for 369 reduced proportions of early and late NK cells, mucosal-associated invariant T (MAIT) cells, 370 and memory B cells (Fig.5). Of note, CD57 expression was significantly increased in CD4+ T 371 cells and $\gamma \delta$ T cells (Fig. S12).

372 Autoimmune manifestations were prominent in all patients. In some cases, severe 373 autoimmune enteropathy, reminiscent of the clinical presentation of FOXP3 deficient patients, 374 suggested possible Tregs dysfunctions¹⁸. Tregs lymphocytes, were first analyzed using the 375 CD4⁺CD25⁺CD127_{low} surface markers. Despite a slight decrease in patient F, the proportion 376 of this subset is comparable to the controls in the two other patients tested (Fig. 6A). 377 Conversely, we observed a substantial reduction in the expression of FOXP3, and to a lesser 378 extent, of HELIOS, by analyzing intracellular staining (Fig.6B). Therefore, the proportion of 379 activated Tregs defined as CD4+ FOXP3+ HELIOS+, was lower in these patients compared 380 to controls (Fig. 6B). These results suggested that DOCK11 could be involved in the 381 regulation of FOXP3 in Tregs. Among multiple factors regulating the FOXP3 transcription, $S³⁸²$ STAT5B activation has been described as a main regulator of FOXP3¹⁹. Consistent with the 383 reduced FOXP3 expression in Tregs, we found a reduced activation of STAT5B in the 384 patients' T cells compared to healthy donors upon IL2 stimulation (Fig. 5C-D). In contrast we 385 observed a normal or slightly reduced IL6-dependent STAT3 activation in the patients' cells, 386 suggesting a major impact of DOCK11 deficiency on the IL2-STAT5 pathway only (Fig 387 S13C). A decreased IL2-induced STAT5B activation is also observed in B lymphocytes and 388 MAIT cells (Fig. 5C-D). More importantly, we confirmed a decreased IL2-induced STAT5B 389 activation in T cells from patients (Fig. S13A) and from healthy donors, in which we induced 390 a decrease in DOCK11 expression by knock-down (Fig. S13B). Consistently, we also 391 observed a variably reduced proliferation upon CD3 stimulation in activated T cells from five 392 patients compared to HDs (Fig. S14). Overall, these results suggest that the DOCK11 393 deficiency is associated with an impairment of the IL2-STATB pathway in different patients' 394 lymphocyte subsets as well as in DOCK11 knocked-down T cells from healthy donors.

395

396 **Discussion:**

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398 We identified seven private and rare hemizygous missense mutations of *DOCK11* leading to 399 early onset autoimmune disease. Human DOCK11 deficiency has never been described so far. 400 DOCK11 is a GEF protein of the DOCK-D family. Mostly expressed in hematopoietic cells, 401 DOCK11 is suspected to impact actin cytoskeleton remodeling through CDC42 activation, an 402 important Rho-GTPase $8,16$.

403 All *DOCK11* mutations are predicted to be deleterious, and 3D modeling suggests that they 404 could impact the stability of the protein conformation or its interactions with putative 405 partners. Accordingly, reduced DOCK11 expression was observed in patients' platelets and 406 lymphocytes. The different variants, leading to a variable protein expression, may account for 407 the variable clinical phenotypes observed in patients. Nevertheless, all tested patients showed 408 reduced CDC42 activity in platelets, highlighting the abnormal function of the *DOCK11* 409 mutants. Decreased CDC42 activity in platelets was associated with impaired platelet 410 morphology, spreading, and activation. The spreading of platelets implicates Rho-GTPases 411 such as CDC42, RAC, and RHO via integrins activation^{13,15}. Some studies suggested that 412 CDC42 is involved in platelet filopodia formation and spreading on fibrinogen²⁰. RhoA 413 activity, implicated in lamellipodia and stress fiber formation of platelets, was increased in the 414 patients tested and increased after inhibition of Cdc42 in healthy donors' platelets. Stimulated 415 platelets from patients had a higher proportion of spread platelets, with deficient filopodia 416 formation, reflecting a potentially disrupted balance between the Rho-GTPases Cdc42 and 417 RhoA.

418 Of note, reduced integrin α IIb β 3 activation was observed in patients' platelets upon 419 stimulation with an agonist at low concentration but not at high concentration. These results 420 are consistent with a partial impairment of CDC42 activation in patients' platelets²¹. 421 Interestingly, circulating anti- α IIb β 3 antibodies were detected in patient A, who developed 422 severe ITP with highly fluctuating platelet counts. The absence of significant bleeding 423 disorder in DOCK11 patients, with or without ITP, suggests that the hemostatic role of 424 platelets is not impacted. Platelet extensive exploration highlighted impaired actin 425 cytoskeleton, abnormal activation, and disrupted Rho-Gtpase balance in all patients tested, 426 regardless of the presence or absence of thrombocytopenia. Functional non-hemostatic 427 thrombopathy may impair the immunoregulation role of platelets as described in other 428 autoimmune diseases $12,22,23$.

429 T and B cell development and function can be disrupted in immune-related actinopathy, as 430 previously described in other DOCK deficiencies^{24,26}. Patients' T cells and *DOCK11* knock-431 down activated T cells from healthy controls exhibited aberrant cytoskeleton rearrangement 432 with larger spreading areas and more protrusions, which could impair migration, sensing, or 433 interactions with other immune cells $\frac{27,28}{ }$. Indeed, migration speed under confinement was 434 increased concomitantly with an abnormal actin polymerization at the rear during migration 435 of the patients' activated T cells and DOCK11 knock-down model, a finding consistent with 436 an impaired balance in the activity of $Rho-GTPases^{29}$. Moreover, the pharmacological 437 inhibition of RAC/CDC42 in healthy donor-derived T cells reproduced the aberrant 438 spreading, faster migration, and impaired actin polarization, as observed in patients-derived T 439 cells. Conversely, incubating the patients' T cells with a CDC42 activator restored normal 440 spreading. Taken together, these results support the conclusion that DOCK11 deficiency 441 impairs the balance between CDC42 and RhoA activity in activated T cells, as observed in 442 platelets. Interestingly, a faster migration was also observed in patients B-LCL, indicating that 443 DOCK11 would be a general regulator of lymphocyte migration. Lastly, we observed aberrant 444 protrusions and ruffles upon reduced protein expression by the *DOCK11* knock-down in 445 MDDC from healthy donors. This is reminiscent of the role of mouse Dock11 (Zizimin2) in 446 the actin remodeling of bone marrow-derived dendritic cells³⁰. The abnormal cell shape of 447 DOCK11 inactivated MDDC, and their increased production of IL-1β suggest that the 448 patients' dendritic could contribute to the immune dysregulation observed in patients.

449 The patients' immunological phenotyping showed an abnormal distribution of the B cell 450 subsets with increased circulating BAFF and APRIL in the patients' plasma. Impaired balance 451 of B cell populations in favor of transitional and $CD21_{low}$ B cells with elevated cytokine levels 452 of the BAFF complex may promote autoimmunity in patients, as already described in other 453 immune disorders³¹. The Dock11 deficient mouse model (known as the Zizimin 2 knock-out, 454 the mouse counterpart of DOCK11) showed disturbed B cell subsets distribution³². But 455 surprisingly, these mice did not develop autoimmune manifestations. However, many

456 examples of genetic defects lead to very different phenotypes in humans and mice. For 457 example, Lrba knock-out in mice has no impact on regulating the immune response, whereas 458 LRBA-deficient patients present with Primary immune deficiency and a broad spectrum of 459 autoimmune manifestations $33,34$.

460 T cell subsets' distribution was not overtly disturbed except for a reduced proportion of MAIT 461 cells. NK cell subsets were also low in patients but without obvious clinical consequences 462 such as viral infections or macrophage activation syndrome. Immunosenescence of T cells 463 was increased in patients, consistent with the immune-aging role of DOCK11 suggested by 464 the mouse models $30,32$. Increased pro-inflammatory Th1 and Th17 cytokines in the patients' 465 plasma, without any documented infection, suggest a possible immune dysregulation that 466 could be the cause or the consequence of the patients' autoimmune and auto-inflammatory 467 phenotypes.

468 All patients presented with various clinical phenotypes, including severe autoimmune 469 cytopenia, SLE, auto-inflammatory syndrome, or lymphoproliferation. Most patients had 470 inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), and some had various immune-related skin 471 manifestations. Importantly, none of the patients had severe or recurrent infections, and 472 vaccinal responses were normal in the two tested patients indicating an overall normal 473 humoral response.

474 The severe early-onset autoimmune enteropathy observed in some patients was reminiscent of 475 the prominent symptoms observed in FOXP3 deficient patients, suggesting a potential Tregs 476 defect in the DOCK11 patients¹⁸. Whereas we observed a mildly reduced proportion of Tregs 477 in one patient, we found the expected proportion of this subset in the other patients. However 478 more strikingly, we found a markedly decreased expression of FOXP3, the master Tregs 479 transcription factor, and HELIOS to a lesser extent. These two transcription factors are 480 essential to sustain the Tregs suppressive functions^{35,36}. Moreover, Tregs are highly dependent 481 of IL2 and its downstream signaling pathway, as observed in IL2, IL2R, and STAT5B 482 deficiencies^{37,38}, all characterized by impaired Tregs function and overt autoimmune 483 manifestations. Interestingly, we observed a reduced STAT5B activation in the patients' T 484 and B cells upon IL2 stimulation. This was corroborated by a slight but consistent reduction 485 in T cell proliferation. More importantly, the reduced IL2-induced STAT5B activation is 486 observed in DOCK11 knock-down T cells from healthy controls. All these results point to a 487 global IL2-STAT5 signaling impairment in the context of DOCK11 deficiency and provide a 488 molecular basis for the underlying mechanisms leading to autoimmunity in the patients.

489 One challenging observation is that DOCK11 patients develop overt autoimmune 490 manifestations but not viral, bacterial, or fungal infections, whereas DOCK8 patients 491 predominantly suffer from recurrent sinopulmonary and mucocutaneous infections, severe 492 allergy with elevated serum levels of IgE but mild or any autoimmune symptoms³⁹. 493 Nevertheless, both defects are leading to a reduced CDC42 activity⁴⁰, which therefore seems 494 to be the main cause of the loss of cell shape integrity and abnormal motility, and indicates 495 that both GEFs are non-redundant and possibly working in concert in this process. This also 496 indicates that the impaired CDC42 activation is not fully involved in the pathophysiological 497 mechanisms of each defect. The list of DOCK partners is probably far from being wholly 498 defined. Since DOCK8 and DOCK11 belong to different DOCK subfamilies, one can 499 anticipate that they may share common but also different partners. In addition, their respective

500 expression may differ according to immune cell subsets. In humans, it was reported that the 501 DOCK8 deficiency is associated with a reduced STAT3 activation in various lymphocyte 502 subsets, consistent with the observation that DOCK8 deficient patients share common clinical 503 and biological features with STAT3 deficient ones such as hyper IgE, food allergy, and 504 mucocutaneous infections related to impaired Th17 function⁴¹. In this study, we uncovered an 505 IL2-STAT5 (but not an IL6-STAT3) signalization defect and an abnormal Tregs phenotype, 506 two findings consistent with the development of autoimmunity. Surprisingly a similar Tregs 507 dysfunction has also been described in DOCK8 deficient patients, despite the lack of 508 prominent autoimmunity, further blurring the understanding of the mechanisms involved 42 . 509 Very interestingly, whereas Dock8 deficient mice have impaired Tregs function but do not 510 develop autoimmunity, Treg-specific Dock8 deficient mice have lymphoproliferation, 511 autoantibodies production, and enteropathy 43 , thus suggesting that DOCK8 deficiency in 512 conventional T cells, or maybe in other immune subsets, is protecting from the onset of 513 autoimmunity in patients.

514 On the other hand, one might speculate that the impairment of some immune subsets, such as 515 the MAIT cells, for instance, or that the platelets abnormalities observed in the DOCK11 516 deficient patients could contribute to the development of autoimmunity. Lastly, the DOCK11 517 expression pattern is not restricted to the hematopoietic compartment but also allows its 518 expression in various skin and intestinal cells⁴⁴. Accordingly, we observed aberrant 519 protrusions of primary skin fibroblasts derived from patient A, suggesting an impact on the 520 actin cytoskeleton remodeling in non-hematopoietic cells. Therefore, it is not excluded that 521 the DOCK11 deficiency in non-hematopoietic cells contributes to tissue inflammation, 522 possibly driving the autoimmune response to these tissues.

523 Another sharp contrast with the DOCK8 deficiency is the lack of overt viral infection despite 524 the impact of the DOCK11 deficiency on T cell migration and possibly other immune cells, 525 suggesting that DOCK11 deficient T cells could convey a normal tissue surveillance, possibly 526 in line with a normal or only slightly reduced STAT3 activation. In addition to differential 527 expression in immune cells, this might also relate to DOCK11-specific functions. 528 Recently, Ide et al. identified DOCK11 as a potential therapeutic target to prevent 529 persistent HBV infection⁴⁵. In this work, the authors suggested that DOCK11 plays a role 530 in the retrograde trafficking in the HBV infection and contributes to maintaining cccDNA. If 531 this mechanism holds for other Herpes viruses, the DOCK11 deficiency might passively 532 protect from those viral infections.

533

534 In conclusion, this study describes a new X-linked immune-related actinopathy in eight 535 patients with severe early-onset autoimmunity, including SLE, caused by *DOCK11* 536 hemizygous mutations. Platelets, T, and B cells from DOCK11 deficient patients showed 537 aberrant cytoskeleton remodeling with impaired CDC42 activity. The regulation of Foxp3 in 538 Tregs is impaired, involving the IL2-STAT5B pathway. Our results underscore the crucial 539 DOCK11 function in hematopoietic cells and provide a novel example of the implication of 540 actin cytoskeleton in human immune disorders. Further analyses are warranted to better 541 understand the complex interactions between DOCK11 with other DOCK molecules, notably 542 DOCK8, as well as to better characterize the molecular link with the IL2-STAT5B pathway. 543 This can provide key information to help clinicians to adopt the best therapeutic options. All

544 patients have been treated with different immunosuppressive drugs that variably controlled 545 the autoimmune manifestations. Considering that the DOCK11 deficiency is impacting the 546 cell shape, the mechanical migration or the adhesion of circulating cells, T regulators and 547 possible tissue-resident immune cells, allogenic hematopoietic stem cell (HSCs) 548 transplantation could be contemplated as a therapeutic option.

549 Limits of the study: all patients present with autoimmune features that may reflect biased 550 recruitment in our laboratory. Furthermore, the identified mutations seem to confer a partial 551 DOCK11 defect. Therefore, we do not exclude that *DOCK11* mutations could be associated 552 with a broader or more severe clinical phenotype, including autoinflammatory diseases $40,41,42$,

553 or combined immune deficiencies, notably in patients with a complete DOCK11 deficiency.

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558

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589 **Authorship contributions**

- 590 Conceptualization, C.B., L.D., T.G., A.F., A.K., F.A., F.E.S., I.C, F.R-L.; Methodology, I.C.,
- 591 P.V.; Investigation, C.B., LD., T.G., A.K., M.B., C.Bru., B.D, M.M.-N., J.S., C.R., J-C.B.,
- 592 P.P., M-C.S., O.P., A.M., V.P., P.V., S.B., A.V., M.Z., C.M., M.R.; Data Curation, L.D, N.G.,
- 593 I.C., Q.R. C.M.; Formal Analysis, C.B., L.D., I.C., T.G., P.P., Q.R.; Writing Original Draft,
- 594 C.B., L.D., T.G, F.E.S., I.C., A.K, F.A., F.R-L.; Writing, Review & Editing, I.C., Q.R., N.A.,
- 595 P.D.A., M.C., P.P., N.C-B., F.C-H., S.F., P.D., L.L., D.M., P.R., A.W-M., M.R., B.N., J-C.B., 596 A.M., A.K., F.A., M.B., M-C.S., C.B., L.D., F.R-L.; Visualization, I.C., L.D., C.B., Q.R.,
- 597 N.G., T.G., P.P., F.A., A.K., M.M-N, B.D., J-C.B., T.G.; Resources, C.L., N.A., P.D.A., B.B-
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- 602 All authors reviewed the manuscript.
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604 **Disclosure of Conflicts of Interest**

- 605 L.D. is a former employee of Sanofi, France and may hold shares and/or stock options in the 606 company. Other authors have nothing to disclose.
- 607

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- 715

716 **Table 1 – Clinical and biological phenotypes of** *DOCK11* **mutated patients**

717 Listed are reference ranges or laboratory values for the patients' age groups. Therapy refers to 718 all therapies that patients received.

719 ITP: immune thrombocytopenia, IBD: inflammatory bowel disease, JIA: Juvenile Idiopathic 720 Arthritis, SLE: Systemic Lupus erythematosus, AI neutropenia: Autoimmune neutropenia, 721 LE: Lupus erythematosus, PID: pulmonary interstitial disease. IVIG: intravenous 722 immunoglobulins, MMF: mycophenolate mofetil, HCQ: hydroxychloroquine. NC: denotes 723 for Not complete B phenotype, MZB: marginal zone B cells ,N: normal values, γ: gamma-724 globulins detected in serum protein electrophoresis, ANCA: anti-neutrophil cytoplasmic 725 antibody, ANA: antinuclear antibodies, Anti- α IIb β 3: antibody against Integrin alpha-726 IIb/beta-3, TPO: Thyroid Peroxidase antibody, RF: Rheumatoid Factor, Anti-RNP: Anti-727 Ribonucleoprotein antibody, Anti-Sm: Anti-smooth muscle antibody , + IgG Coombs: 728 positive direct Coombs with detection of IgG, + IgG and complement Coombs: positive direct

- 729 Coombs with detection of IgG and C3.
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732 **Figure 1 -** *DOCK11* **hemizygous mutations: structural consequences and protein** 733 **expression:** Panel **(A)** shows dermatological clinical findings of DOCK11 deficiency patients 734 (from left to right): lobular panniculitis on feet in Patient A, bullous cutaneous SLE in Patient 735 D2, non-infectious ecthyma gangrenosum on external lateral border of the right foot in Patient 736 F. **(B)** Schematic overview of DOCK11 protein with the positions of patients' DOCK11 737 mutations. Molecular partners described to interact with DOCK11 are mentioned below the 738 domain they bind. **(C)** 3D structure of human DOCK11, as predicted by AlphaFold2 (ribbon 739 representation, except for DRH2 which is shown as a blue surface). Confidence is high 740 (pLDDT>90) for the individual domain 3D structures, whereas the 3D structure of the N- and 741 C-terminal sequences, linkers between domains and large loops (often disordered) remain 742 elusive (low pLDDT values - asterisks). Two such very large loops are depicted with broken 743 lines, with the amino acid intervals. Positions of the domains relative to each other also 744 remain uncertain, except form the C2-DHR1 interface (very low PEA (predicted error 745 alignment) values). Mutated amino acids are depicted in magenta (Patients A, B, C, D and F). 746 D414 is predicted exposed at the surface of the C2 domain and likely to play a significant role 747 in the C2-DRH1 interface (Fig. S6A-C). L1298 is predicted with confidence as being buried 748 with the hydrophobic core of the ARM repeats, conserved in DOCK-C proteins (Fig. S6D). 749 The region including H1336 and R1366, more variable and predicted with a lower confidence, 750 is located at the concave surface of the ARM repeats, where interactions take place in 751 complexes of other DOCK proteins with partners. **(D)** 3D structure of DHR-2 domain of 752 human DOCK11, as predicted by AlphaFold2. The DHR-2 (in light blue) is represented 753 interacting with CDC42 (in gray), as deduced from the superimposition of DOCK11 with the 754 3D structure of DOCK9 in complex with CDC42. Mutated amino acids are depicted in 755 magenta and correspond to patients E and G mutations. L1706 is in the hydrophobic core of 756 DHR2 lobe A, important for dimerization. R1885 is part of DHR2 lobe B, which consists of 757 two sheets predicted in direct contact with the switch 1 domain of CDC42. **(E)** DOCK11 758 expression was evaluated in activated T cells of healthy donors (HDs) and patients (A, B, C, 759 D1, F and G) by Western blotting. Dotted lines indicate that the samples were derived from 760 the same gel but were non-contiguous. The graph shows the relative expression of DOCK11 761 versus HDs (set to 1) \pm SEM after normalization against Ku-70 expression). 762

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764 **Figure 2 - Study of platelets from** *DOCK11* **mutated patients: (A)** DOCK11 expression 765 was evaluated in platelets of healthy donors (HDs) and patients (A, C, D1, D2, F and G) by 766 Western blotting. Dotted lines indicate that the samples were derived from the same gel but 767 were non-contiguous. The graph shows the mean of the relative expression of DOCK11 768 versus HD (set to 1) \pm SEM after normalization against β-actin expression from several 769 independent experiments (HDs, n = 69; A, n = 22; C, n = 14; G, n = 16; D1, D2, n = 8; F, n = 770 15). Statistical difference was evaluated by one-way ANOVA with Dunnett's correction test 771 for multiple comparisons (**p* < 0.05; ****p* < 0.001). **(B)** Platelet count for each patient (A, C, 772 D1, D2, F, G) was determined by automated blood cell counter. Shaded area represents the 773 normal range between 150 x 10^9 and 400 x 10^9 platelets/L. Patients A and C were investigated 774 for their platelet count several times (2 and 3 times, respectively). **(C)** Platelet size was 775 evaluated by flow cytometry. Each dot represents the mean size measured by the mean 776 forward scatter height (FSC-H; a.u., arbitrary units) of washed platelets from healthy donors 777 (HDs) and patients. The box-and-whisker plot shows the normal range, determined from HDs. 778 Whiskers represent the 5-95 percentiles, the box correspond to the interquartile range, the 779 center line is the median and the cross indicates the mean of 65 platelets. **(D)** Platelet 780 ultrastructure which was analyzed once for each patient using transmission electron 781 microscopy (TEM). Scale bar represents 1 µm. **(E, F)** TEM analysis of platelet ultrastructure 782 in each patient. Platelet surface (E) and platelet shape (F) which is defined as the ratio 783 between the largest diameter and the smallest diameter are derived from the TEM images. 784 Graphs represent the mean \pm SEM of at least 1100 HD's platelets and 100 patient's platelets. 785 Statistical significance was determined in a one-way ANOVA with the Dunnett's post-test for 786 multiple comparisons. **(G)** Graph represents the mean percentage \pm SEM of discoid platelets 787 (dark grey), platelet with filopodia (light grey) and platelets with lamellipodia or full 788 spreading (white) of at least 150 analyzed platelets from several independent experiments 789 (HDs, n=17; patient A, n=4; patient C, n=3). Statistical significance was determined only for 790 patients A and C compared to HDs in a one-way ANOVA with the Dunnett's post-test for 791 multiple comparisons (* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$). Patients D1, D2, F and G were not 792 statistically analyzed since only one experiment was performed. Scale bar represents 10 µm. 793 **(H)** Spreading of HD and patients' platelets onto fibrinogen matrix for 30 minutes was 794 analyzed by epifluorescence microscopy in the presence of apyrase (5 U/mL) and 795 indomethacin (4.5 μ M). Platelet morphology was visualized using F-actin detection by 796 fluorescently labeled-phalloidin. **(I)** CDC42 activity evaluated in HDs' platelets and patients' 797 platelets by G-LISA after stimulation by 0.5 U/mL thrombin for 1 minute in unstirred 798 conditions. Graph represents the relative CDC42 activity of each patient compared to that of 799 HD (set to 100%). 800

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802 **Figure 3 -** *DOCK11* **mutations lead to abnormal cell morphologies:** Spreading assays with 803 different lymphocytes subsets. **(A)** T cell morphologies after spreading. Blue color 804 corresponds to DAPI staining (nucleus). Red color corresponds to actin staining. Each patient 805 is represented by a different symbol: Patient A (*), patient B (\bullet), patient C (\bullet), patient D1 (\times), 806 patient $D2 (\star)$, patient $F(\nabla)$, patient G (**o**). Coverslips were coated with either poly-L-lysine 807 (i); poly-L-lysine, anti-CD28 and anti-CD3 (0,1μg/mL) antibodies (ii); or poly-L-lysine, anti-808 CD28 and anti-CD3 (1μg/mL) antibodies (iii). Scale is set at 10μm. Cell area was measured 809 with or without CN02 treatment (CDC42/RAC1 activator). Non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis' 810 test was performed (**p* < 0.05). **(B)** B-lymphoblastic cell lines morphologies after spreading. 811 Several morphologies were observed: cells with no protrusion, cells spread along one axis, 812 cells with fine protrusions (filopodia), cells with lamellipodia and cells presenting both 813 lamellipodia and filopodia. Cells patients presented abnormal protrusions. Repartition of each 814 morphology types is shown. Scale is set at 10μm. **(C)** Morphologies of mature monocyte-815 derived dendritic cells (MDDC) from healthy donor, either using a scramble sh-RNA or a 816 *DOCK11*-sh-RNA, after stimulation with LPS 100ng/ml (Lipopolysaccharide) for 24 hours, 817 were observed using scanning electron microscopy (SEM). Scale is set at 5 μ m. 818

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820 **Figure 4 - DOCK11 is needed for human leukocytes migration under confinement:** 821 Analysis of human healthy donor (HD) and DOCK11-deficient T cell migration in 822 fibronectin-coated microchannels. Boxes include the 80% of the points and bars represent the 823 higher and lower 10% of points. **(A)** Representative montage of the change of position over 824 time of human T cell blast migrating inside microchannels of 4x 5µm with a timelapse of 2 825 min. **(B)** Representative kymograph of T cell blast from Healthy Donors (HD, top panel) and 826 DOCK11 patients (A – E, lower panels as indicated). **(C)** Mean instantaneous speed of HD 827 and DOCK11 T cell blasts migrating in 4 x 5 μ m microchannels. Results from n=2 828 independent experiments with each condition. Unpaired non-parametric Mann-Whitney test 829 was used to evaluate statistical significance between the mean speeds of controls and patients 830 (* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$). **(D)** Density maps representing the enrichment of 831 actin in HD and DOCK11 deficient T cells migrating in 8 x 5 µm microchannels. Cells were 832 allowed to migrate and fixed with 4% PFA to maintain the polarized morphology and stained 833 with phalloidin to visualize F-actin. The density maps were generated by averaging the signal 834 from HD n= 85, DOCK11A n=32, DOCK11D n=46 and DOCK11E n=63 cells. 835 Quantification of the signal intensity on density maps presented as front/rear ratio per cell. 836 One-way ANOVA was used to evaluate statistical significance. **(E)** Mean instantaneous speed 837 of HD and DOCK11 T cell blasts (patient G) migrating in 4 x 5µm microchannels, with or 838 without RAC inhibitor treatment. Results from n=2 independent experiment with each 839 condition. One-way ANOVA test was used to evaluate statistical significance. Unpaired non-840 parametric Mann-Whitney test was used to evaluate statistical significance between the mean 841 speeds of controls and treated controls, patient and treated patient ($p < 0.05$). 842

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844 **Figure 5. Immune phenotype by mass cytometry**

845 **(A**) UMAP (Unifolm Manifold Approximation and Projection) of immune cell subsets 846 clusters analyzed by mass cytometry on whole blood samples from DOCK11 patients $(n= 7)$ 847 and age-matched healthy donors (n=6). Each cluster is color coded. **(B)** Cell cluster biases 848 observed between DOCK11 patients and healthy donors. DOCK11 patients have a 849 significantly lower percentage of CD56_{bright} NK, late NK cells, MAIT, and memory B cells. 850 Two-tailed p-values were determined with a nonparametric Mann-Whitney test. $(*)$ *p*-value \le 851 0.05; (**) *p*-value < 0.01; (***) *p*-value < 0.005.

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853 **Figure 6. Treg phenotype and STAT5 activation**

854 **(A)** FoxP3 mean fluorescence intensity on Tregs from Healthy donors (HDs) and DOCK11 855 patients. Treg are defined by CD4+ CD25+ CD127low as depicted in the graph on the right 856 side of the panel. **(B)** Representative dotplots of CD3+ CD4+ Foxp3+ Helios+ cells from 857 healthy donors (HDs) and two DOCK11 patients. **(C)** Representative histograms of phospho-858 STAT5 in T, CD25+ T and B cells from healthy donors and DOCK11 patients. Cells were 859 stimulated for 60 min with IL2. Results for unstimulated (NS) cells are shown with the black 860 peak. **(D)** Kinetics of phospho-STAT5 expression upon IL2 stimulation: unstimulated (NS), 861 15 and 60 minutes. Mean fluorescence intensity (MFI) of phospho-STAT5 in T, CD25+ T, 862 MAIT and B cells from healthy donors (HDs) and DOCK11 patients. 863

Figure 1: DOCK11 mutations

Figure 2: Platelets' study

Figure 3: Morphological impairment after spreading

Figure 4: Migration assays $-$ reflecting reduced CDC42 activity

Figure 5: Immune phenotype by CyTOF

Figure 6: Treg phenotype and STAT5 activation

