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To cite this article before publication: Henriett Halasz *et al* 2018 *Methods Appl. Fluoresc.* in press <https://doi.org/10.1088/2050-6120/aad57d>

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# Live cell superresolution-SIM imaging analysis of the intercellular transport of microvesicles and costimulatory proteins *via* nanotubes between immune cells

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**Keywords:** membrane nanotubes, SR-SIM imaging, microvesicle transport, microtubule, actin filaments, motor proteins, lymphocytes, macrophages

**Running title:** intercellular transport of microvesicles and CD86 via nanotubes assessed by superresolution microscopy

**ABSTRACT:**

Membrane nanotubes are transient long-distance connections between cells that can facilitate intercellular communication. These tethers can form spontaneously between many cell types, including cells of the immune and nervous systems. Traffic of viral proteins, vesicles, calcium ions, mRNA, miRNA, mitochondria, lysosomes and membrane proteins/raft domains have all been reported so far via the open ended tunneling nanotubes (TNTs). Recently we reported on existence of plasma membrane derived GM<sub>1</sub>/GM<sub>3</sub> ganglioside enriched microvesicles and costimulatory proteins in nanotubes connecting B lymphocytes, the way they are formed and transported across TNTs, however, still remained unclear. Here, using live cell confocal and Structured Illumination (SR-SIM) superresolution imaging, we show that B cells respond to bacterial (Cholera) toxin challenge by their subsequent internalization followed by rapid formation of intracellular microvesicles (MVs). These MVs are then transported between adjacent B cells *via* nanotubes. Selective transport-inhibition analysis of two abundant motor proteins in these cell types demonstrated that actin-based non-muscle myosin 2A dominantly mediates intercellular MV-transport *via* TNTs, in contrast to the microtubule-based dynein, as shown by the unchanged transport after inhibition of the latter. As suggested by SR-SIM images of GFP-CD86 transfected macrophages, these costimulatory molecules may be transferred by unusually shaped MVs through thick TNTs connecting macrophages. In contrast, in B cell cultures the same GFP-CD86 is dominantly transported along the membrane wall of TNTs. Such intercellular molecule-exchange can consequently improve the efficiency of antigen-dependent T cell activation, especially in macrophages with weak costimulator expression and T cell activation capacity. Such improved T cell activating potential of these two cell types may result in a more efficient cellular immune response and formation of immunological memory. The results also highlight the power of superresolution microscopy to uncover so far hidden structural details of biological processes, such as microvesicle formation and transport.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Membrane nanotubes (NTs), thin and long cellular protrusion structures connecting cells, were first described more than a decade ago (Onfelt, Nedvetzki et al. 2004, Rustom, Saffrich et al. 2004). Since then, a number of interesting functional capabilities of these nanostructures have been described, such as intercellular signaling/ $\text{Ca}^{2+}$  transfer and transport of protein molecules, prions, vesicles, membrane cargos, nucleic acids or even organelles (Davis and Sowinski 2008, Gerdes and Carvalho 2008, Gurke, Barroso et al. 2008, Sherer and Mothes 2008, Davis 2009).

NTs show high diversity in length, thickness and structure (Austefjord et al. 2014). Concerning their thickness, they are usually characterized as „thin” (~100-300 nm diameter) or ‘thick’ (~400-1000 nm diameter) nanotubes. *In vitro* they always contain actin filaments (F-actin), and the thick NTs often contain microtubules, as well.

Smaller entities, like prions or viruses were reported to be transported across any types of NTs, while transport of larger vesicles and organelles or ‘surfing’ of bacteria were reported mainly through the surface or interior of the thick, open-ended, so called ‘tunneling nanotubes’ (TNTs) (Onfelt, Nedvetzki et al. 2006, Gerdes, Bukoreshtliev et al. 2007, Osteikoetxea-Molnar, Szabo-Meleg et al. 2016). After exploring membrane nanotubes, cells of the nervous and immune systems were studied most deeply, including among others macrophages, neurons, astrocytes, T cells, NK cells and their targets. In addition, functional significance of nanotubes in bridging tumor cells has been nicely demonstrated recently and now it represents a new research line with continuously increasing high medical interest (Lou, Fujisawa et al. 2012, Osswald, Jung et al. 2015, Ady, Thayanythy et al. 2016, Lou 2016).

We have shown recently that mature B lymphocytes also contain microtubules in their thick, tunneling nanotubes, which are able to transport organelles, such as mitochondria or lysosomes, as well (Osteikoetxea-Molnar, Szabo-Meleg et al. 2016). Critical importance of membrane lipids (among others of gangliosides/ glycosphingolipids or cholesterol) in NT-formation were also reported recently (Delage and Zurzolo 2013, Toth, Oszvald et al. 2017). In spite of this continuously accumulating knowledge on membrane nanotubes, many questions about the mechanism and regulation of their formation, the direction of their growth, as well as their functional significance *in vivo* (Seyed-Razavi et al. 2013, Caneparo et al. 2011; Osswald et al. 2015; Rehberg et al. 2016; Saenz-de-Santa-Maria et al. 2017; Teddy and Kulesa 2004; Vignais et al. 2017) still remained open, although the latter publications firmly support that the nanotubes may exist and function in various *in vivo* environments.

In the present study we focused on revealing the intercellular transport properties of B cells’ and macrophages’ nanotubes, as a continuation of our recent work on basic mechanistic properties of B cell nanotube formation (Osteikoetxea-Molnar, Szabo-Meleg et al. 2016, Toth, Oszvald et al. 2017). Here we investigated the formation and transport of intracellular (IC) microvesicles (MVs) after challenging immature (unable to form nanotubular bridges) or mature (with high capacity to form nanotubular networks) B lymphocyte cells with bacterial toxin, the Cholera toxin B subunit (CTX-B) binding with high selectivity/affinity to  $\text{GM}_1/\text{GM}_3$  gangliosides at the cell surface. This process tried to model an *in vivo* often appearing event, the interaction of bacterial toxins with B cell surface.

Using Alexa488-CTX-B and time-lapse live cell confocal (CLSM) and SR-SIM imaging we intended to understand how the ganglioside/CTX-B-enriched microvesicles (MV) (or multivesicular bodies; MVB) are formed and how are they transported through the tunneling nanotubes connecting B cells. We also investigated how the membrane ganglioside level correlates with formation of such intracellular MVs. Particularly, we were also interested in the mechanism of their transport, namely what type of motors proteins are involved in this process.

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3 CD86 is one of the essential B7-family costimulatory proteins expressed on various  
4 antigen presenting cells (such as dendritic cells, B cells or macrophages) that play a key role  
5 in amplifying TCR-dependent T cell activation/cellular immune response, independently of  
6 the quantitative aspects of TCR-antigen recognition. Therefore, CD86 may critically set the  
7 magnitude of T-cell mediated cellular immune response through providing an additional  
8 'second signal' upon binding to their CD28 receptors on T cells (Janakiram, Abadi et al. 2012).

9  
10 Monitoring intercellular trafficking of GFP-CD86 in transfected B cells and  
11 macrophages, utilizing advantages of SR-SIM imaging (Vangindertael, Camacho et al. 2018)  
12 revealed that this essential costimulatory molecule can be exchanged among both cell types.  
13 In B cells it is transported mostly in the membrane wall of nanotubes, while in macrophages  
14 dominantly via large, elongated 'microvesicle-like' structures, inside the TNTs. Clarification  
15 of the nature of such mobile intracellular CD86 compartments, however, needs further detailed  
16 investigations. Our results, also demonstrating power of superresolution microscopy  
17 (Vangindertael, Camacho et al. 2018) over confocal microscopy to reveal structural details of  
18 biological processes, such as microvesicle transport, shed light on some new mechanistic  
19 details of the nanotube-mediated cellular communication between cells of the immune system.  
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## 24 **2. EXPERIMENTAL DETAILS**

### 25 *2.1. Cells, culture and labeling.*

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27 B cells of murine origin with two different stages of maturation/differentiation were used in  
28 this study, A20 mature B cells (ATCC TIB208, I-Ad/Ed+) and 38C13 immature B cells (Caspi,  
29 Taya et al. 1995). These murine B and macrophage (RAW 264.7; ATCC® TIB-71™) cell lines,  
30 were cultured in RPMI-1640 medium, supplemented with 2 mM L-glutamine, 1mM Na-  
31 pyruvate, 50 µM 2-mercaptoethanol, antibiotics and 10% FCS, and were kept at 37°C in 5%  
32 CO<sub>2</sub> incubator. Expression of cell markers during tissue culture were continuously checked  
33 using immunocytochemical labeling and BD FACSAria III flow cytometer (BD, San Jose, CA,  
34 USA).  
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### 39 *2.2. Reagents, cell transfection & treatments*

40 Fibronectin (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO, USA) was used as optimal ECM support  
41 (Osteikoetxea-Molnar, Szabo-Meleg et al. 2016) for studying B cells in live cell imaging  
42 chamber.  
43 Alexa488/Alexa647-Cholera toxin B were purchased from Life Technologies (Carlsbad, USA).  
44 Ciliobrevin D, specific inhibitor of dynein motor proteins were from Sigma-Aldrich. P-nitro-  
45 blebbistatin, inhibitor of non-muscle myosin 2A (Kepiro, Varkuti et al. 2014) was purchased  
46 from Optopharma Ltd (Hungary). For live cell CD86 experiments, RAW246.7 murine  
47 macrophages and A20 murine B lymphocytes were electroporated by Amaxa Nucleofector IIB  
48 device (programs T-020 and L-013 were used, respectively) according to the manufacturer's  
49 instruction. Briefly, for each sample the mixture of 87 µl of nucleofector solution and 19 µl of  
50 supplement was prepared and added to the cells together with 2 µl GFP-CD86 DNA construct  
51 (pCMV6-AC-GFP; OriGene Technologies, Rockville, MD, USA). The transfected cells were  
52 then passaged into a fibronectin coated glass petri dish and incubated overnight (37°C, 5%  
53 CO<sub>2</sub>). A pCMV6-AC-GFP vector with no insert was used as control in the experiments. To  
54 visualize endogenous CD86 cells were fixed with 4% paraformaldehyde (PFA) for 10 min, at  
55 room temperature, then permeabilized with 0.1% Triton X-100+5% BSA (Sigma-Aldrich, St.  
56 Louis, MO, USA) for 20 min at RT and incubated with CD86 (B7-2) monoclonal antibody  
57 (GL1, BD Biosciences, Franklin Lakes, NJ, USA) for 1 h at RT. After washing step the cells  
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3 were incubated with donkey anti-rat biotinylated secondary antibody (Jackson  
4 ImmunoResearch Europe Ltd. UK) for 24 hrs at 4°C in 0.05% thimerosal (Sigma-Aldrich, St.  
5 Louis, MO, USA) containing blocking solution then after 4 hrs incubation with the ABC  
6 complex (Vectastain® Elite® ABC-HRP Kit, Vector Laboratories, Burlingame, USA) the  
7 signal was amplified by Alexa594-conjugated tyramide (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham,  
8 MA, USA) and H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO, USA) for 10 min at RT, finally cells  
9 were mounted in Vectashield (Vector Laboratories, Burlingame, CA, USA) medium. To  
10 visualize Caveolin-1 RAW 264.7 macrophages were first labelled with anti-Cav-1 monoclonal  
11 antibody for 30 min at RT, then goat anti-mouse Alexa555 was used as secondary antibody  
12 after the previously mentioned fixation and permeabilization procedures (see above). Anti-  
13 Cav-1 primary and anti-mouse Alexa555 secondary antibodies were the kind gift of Prof. Anna  
14 L. Kiss (Semmelweis University, Faculty of Medicine, Department of Anatomy, Histology and  
15 Embryology, Budapest, Hungary).

### 19 2.3. *Quantitative measurement of NT growth and vesicle transport with live cell imaging*

21 Borosilicate bottomed chambers (P35G-0.170-14-C MatTek In Vitro Life Science  
22 Laboratories, Bratislava, Slovak Republic) were coated (or not) with 10 µg/ml fibronectin  
23 overnight to model physiological circumstances; temperature was controlled at 37±0.1°C, CO<sub>2</sub>  
24 was controlled at 5%. 10<sup>6</sup> cells/well were incubated at these conditions for 1 hour. The number  
25 of NT-growing cells were counted in each fields, while the fluorescently labelled microvesicles  
26 were counted in the nanotubes, as mobile ones or not, depending on their average displacement  
27 obtained from their motion trajectories, using SR-SIM imaging and Zeiss ZEN software.  
28 Images were analysed with FIJI software (NIH, Bethesda, MD, USA), for velocity calculation  
29 the MultipleKymograph plugin of FIJI  
30 ([https://www.embl.de/eamnet/html/body\\_kymograph.html](https://www.embl.de/eamnet/html/body_kymograph.html)) was used. ImageJ/TrackMate  
31 plugin was used to identify and then track vesicle movement between cells via TNTs.  
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### 35 2.4. *Microscopic Imaging*

37 Nanotube formation was visualized with Zeiss LSM 710 Confocal Laser Scanning Microscope  
38 (CLSM) at 63x magnification (oil immersion objective; N.A.: 1.4). For imaging nanotube  
39 growth, the cells were labelled with Alexa488 or Alexa 647 conjugated CTX-B membrane  
40 ganglioside-specific probes at 40 µg/ml concentration (cells were incubated on ice for 20 min,  
41 in the presence of fluorescently labelled CTX). Cells were then washed once with PBS buffer  
42 and once with RPMI+10% FCS+mercaptoethanol medium and placed on the 10 µg/ml  
43 fibronectin coated (overnight) microchambers. Records were taken and analyzed with the Zen  
44 black software and further analyzed using Image J (FIJI; Wayne Rashband, NIH, Washington,  
45 USA) and occasionally Imaris 8.2 (Bitplane, Zürich, Switzerland) softwares. Superresolution  
46 (dlat:~80-90 nm) SR-SIM imaging was performed in a Zeiss Elyra S1 (63x; N.A.:1.4 objective)  
47 microscope system with live cell imaging conditions. Images were acquired with five grid  
48 rotations and analyzed with the ZEN (Black or Blue versions) software.  
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### 52 2.5. *Statistical analysis*

54 Occurrence frequencies were calculated from at least 20 images/sample (~40-50 cells/field;  
55 ~800 cells/sample) and given as mean ± SD. The frequency of nanotube forming cells were  
56 calculated as a ratio of cells growing at least one nanotube per all cells visible in the particular  
57 field. The number of mobile vesicles/nanotube value was determined on the basis of their  
58 motion trajectories recorded in a 10 min interval from at least three independent cell samples  
59 (ca. 50 NTs/sample). The image analysis and the statistical calculations, including significance  
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3 tests (using Student t-test), were made with ImageJ/FIJI and SigmaPlot 10.0 or Origin 8.0  
4 statistical softwares, respectively.  
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## 10 2.6. Flow cytometry and trypan blue quenching experiments

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12 A20 lymphocytes' pellets were incubated with 40  $\mu\text{g/ml}$  Alexa488-conjugated CTX-B on ice  
13 for 20 min. Control samples were kept on ice without dyes added. Samples were washed twice  
14 at 4°C, then pellets were re-suspended in pre-warmed PBS and incubated at 37°C for 2 min or  
15 30 min to allow and facilitate CTX-B internalization. Samples were then placed on ice and  
16 immediately analyzed for green fluorescence (BPF 530/30) by a BD FACS Canto II flow  
17 cytometer (BD, San Jose, CA, USA). Cell debris and dead cells were excluded from the  
18 analysis based on FSC (forward scatter) vs. SSC (side scatter) dot plot and gating. Extracellular  
19 Alexa488-CTX signal was quenched by adding 0.04 % of cell impermeable dye trypan-blue  
20 (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA), hence fluorescence intensities of the re-  
21 measured samples were representative of internalized signal. Data were analyzed by FACS  
22 DIVA 6.0 software (BD, San Jose, CA, USA), and displayed as relative mean of fluorescence  
23 normalized to unstained control cells.  
24  
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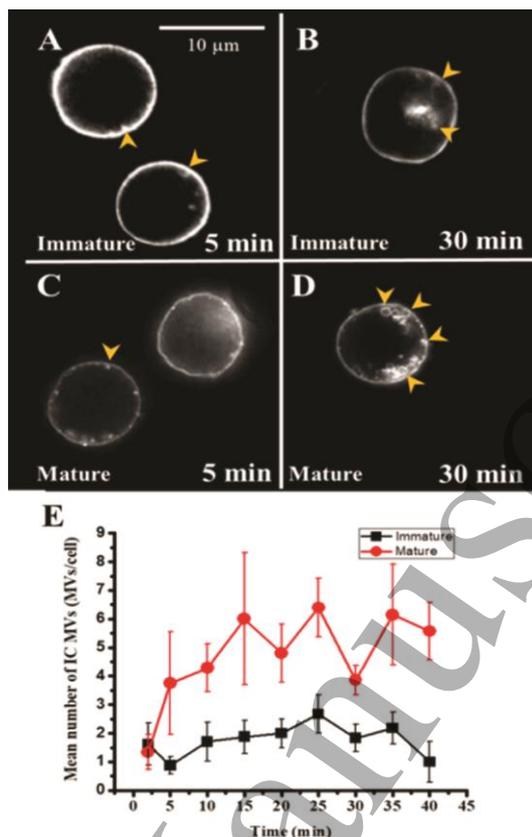
26 For live cell SR-SIM imaging A20 B lymphocytes were treated with 0.1% trypan-blue dye for  
27 2 minutes after Alexa488-CTX labeling (see above). To visualize the quenching effect of  
28 trypan-blue on Alexa dye labeling CD86, A20 lymphocytes were first labelled with anti-CD86  
29 monoclonal antibody (GL1, BD Biosciences, Franklin Lakes, USA) for 30 min at RT, then  
30 goat anti-rat Alexa488 (Thermo Fisher Scientific, Waltham, MA, USA) was used as secondary  
31 antibody. The cells were washed twice and Trypan-blue was added in 0.1% concentration to  
32 quench the fluorescence of the Alexa488 dye.  
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## 36 3. RESULTS

### 37 3.1. Challenging B cells' plasma membrane with Cholera toxin B results in rapid formation of 38 intracellular microvesicles detected by SR-SIM 39 40

41 Since immature (38C13) and mature (A20) murine B cells are substantially different in their  
42 capacity to form nanotubes (Osteikoetxea-Molnar, Szabo-Meleg et al. 2016), first we  
43 compared here their response to bacterial toxin. Cells were incubated with Alexa488-Cholera  
44 toxin B subunit known to bind to GM<sub>1</sub>/GM<sub>3</sub> gangliosides in the plasma membrane of cells  
45 (similarly to various enterotoxins). 30 min after addition, small, spherical microvesicles (MVs)  
46 could be detected in both cell types, although in largely different extent, under live cell imaging  
47 conditions, at 37°C and 5% CO<sub>2</sub> (**Fig. 1A-D**), using SR-SIM imaging. Notice that immature B  
48 cells (38C13) formed much less ganglioside-rich vesicles (and more slowly) than the mature  
49 B cells (A20) did (**Fig. 1E**). Concerning the ganglioside-rich microvesicles, we found that they  
50 form in the cytoplasm rapidly after internalization (formation saturates in ca. 30 min) (**Fig. 1E**)  
51 and are very heterogenous in size, in a range of ~200-1000 nm (see e.g. **Fig. 3D**).  
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54 We should note here that the lateral resolution of CLSM (Schermelleh, Heintzmann et  
55 al. 2010) was not sufficient enough to resolve clearly these microvesicles and determine their  
56 size- or velocity-distribution. SR-SIM imaging, however, with  $d_{\text{lat}}$ : ~80-90 nm provided a  
57 sufficient lateral (x-y) resolution to do that (see: **Supplementary Fig. 1**).  
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**Figure 1.** Cholera toxin B challenge of B cells results in formation of intracellular microvesicles. Representative SR-SIM images of 38C13 immature (A,B) and A20 mature (C,D) murine B cells are shown 5 and 30 min after CTX-B stimulation, respectively. The fluorescence originates from membrane bound Alexa488-CTX-B molecules. The quantitative difference between MV formation in immature and mature B cells, respectively, is shown in panel E, where the mean number of intracellular vesicles/cell is displayed in time. Data at each time point are displayed as mean  $\pm$  SD of 3-4 independent experiments (including ca. 30-50 cells/sample).

### 3.2. Characterization of the ganglioside-rich MVs of B cells

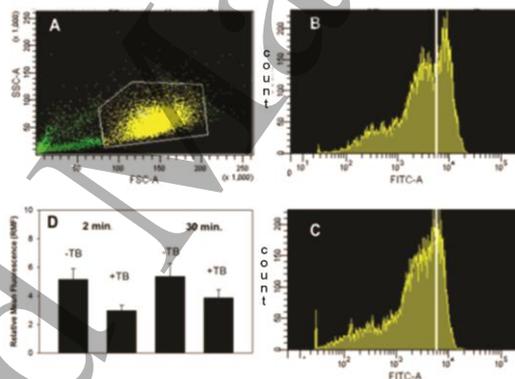
The fact that the intercellular conduits connecting B lymphocytes contain GM<sub>1</sub>/GM<sub>3</sub> ganglioside-rich microvesicles has already been reported by us, recently (Osteikoetxea-Molnar, Szabo-Meleg et al. 2016). While confocal microscopy with its d<sub>lat</sub>: 240 nm resolution could not resolve smaller individual microvesicles formed and transported inside and between cells, SR-SIM imaging could nicely overcome this limitation (**Supplementary Fig.1**). The improved resolution is remarkably visible at the ‘growth cone’-like structure of the TNTs at the interfaces with the cell membranes of the two adjacent B lymphocytes. Here the CLSM can show only a patchy and blurry fluorescence picture, while SR-SIM draws sharply contrasted (fluorescent), membrane covered, small globular vesicle structures. This means that applying live cell SR-SIM imaging, there is a good chance to monitor the mechanistic details of the intercellular MV-transport.

Upon challenging B cells with Alexa488-Cholera-toxin B (40 μg/ml) we observed formation of small intracellular vesicles shown in **Figure 1**. Internalization of this fluorescent ligand bound to their cell surface GM<sub>1</sub>/GM<sub>3</sub> ganglioside receptors was monitored quantitatively by flow cytometry (**Fig. 2A-D**) and also demonstrated by SR-SIM microscopy



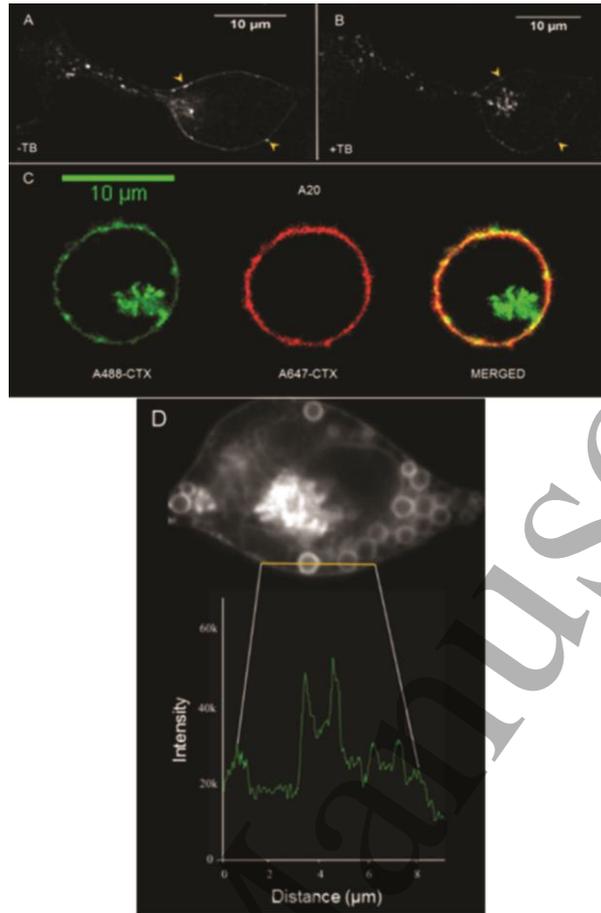
(**Fig. 3A,B**). Trypan-blue quenching of surface bound (extracellular) fluorescence could sensitively discriminate it from the intracellular fluorescence with robust statistical value in flow cytometry (Patino, Soriano et al. 2015). B cells gated by the forward vs. side scatter diagram (**Fig. 2A**) show significantly higher fluorescence in the absence (**Fig. 2B**) than in the presence of trypan-blue (TB) (**Fig. 2C and D**) at both 2 and 30 minutes after CTX administration. At shorter times (2 min) however, the extent of the quenching was much higher than that of at longer times (30 min) (**Fig. 2D**). This clearly demonstrates that the internalization is continuously running and saturates in ca. 30 minutes after addition of the bacterial toxin. These observations are further confirmed by the SR-SIM images showing similar effects of trypan-blue quenching (**Fig. 3A,B**). These representative images demonstrate that while the intracellular, internalized vesicle fluorescence does not change upon TB addition, the fluorescence at the plasma membrane got highly reduced (see yellow arrowheads).

**Fig. 3C** shows a representative image of mature A20 B cells 30 min after CTX-B challenge, where IC MVs already appeared. These cells were re-stained with Alexa647-CTX-B at this time (middle image). A merge of the two images (right), demonstrates coexistence of plasma membrane and intracellularly localized ganglioside-CTX-B complexes/MVs in the same cell. As shown by a representative *line scan diagram* (**Fig. 3D**), the majority of these intracellular microvesicles have 200-500 nm diameter. Some larger (ca. 2-4 times as large) vesicular structures could also be observed (see also in (Osteikoetxea-Molnar, Szabo-Meleg et al. 2016). These are supposed to be multivesicular bodies (MVBs), appearing in a small number. Their detailed characterization needs further investigations.



**Figure 2.** Internalization of surface bound CTX-B as monitored by flow cytometry.

The forward scatter (FSC) vs. side scatter (SSC) diagram of the B lymphocyte (A20) sample and the gating protocol for selecting live, intact B cells is shown on panel A. Panels B and C show representative flow cytometric fluorescence histograms of Alexa488-CTX challenged A20 B lymphocytes in the absence or presence of trypan-blue quencher (0.04%), respectively. Statistics of flow cytometric experiments performed with or without trypan-blue at 2 minutes or 30 minutes after Alexa488-CTX-B administration is shown on D. Each flow cytometric record was made of at least 20,000 cells and the mean and SD values displayed in **Fig.2D** were determined from 3 independent experiments. (The differences in Fig. 2D are significant at the level of  $p < 0.05$ )



**Figure 3.** Internalization and properties of CTX-B enriched microvesicles in B cells.

SR-SIM microscopic images of B cells (**Fig. 3A and B**) clearly show that 30 min after CTX-B challenge addition of trypan-blue (0.1%) largely quenched the plasma membrane associated CTX-B fluorescence, while the internal fluorescence was left unchanged. Coexistence of plasma membrane localized and intracellular MV-localized CTX-B fluorescence is shown on **Fig. 3C**. Fluorescence originated from the cell surface labeling with Alexa488-CTX-B (green) is shown 30 min after administration of CTX-B to the B cell culture (left). These cells at this time point were re-stained with Alexa647 (red) (see middle image); merged image of the two is shown right. Panel **D** shows a representative SR-SIM BW image of a B cell in which the microvesicles are well resolved. A *line scan analysis* shows the intensity distribution along the scanning line in X direction. From this analysis the approximate size (diameter) of the individual vesicles can be estimated.

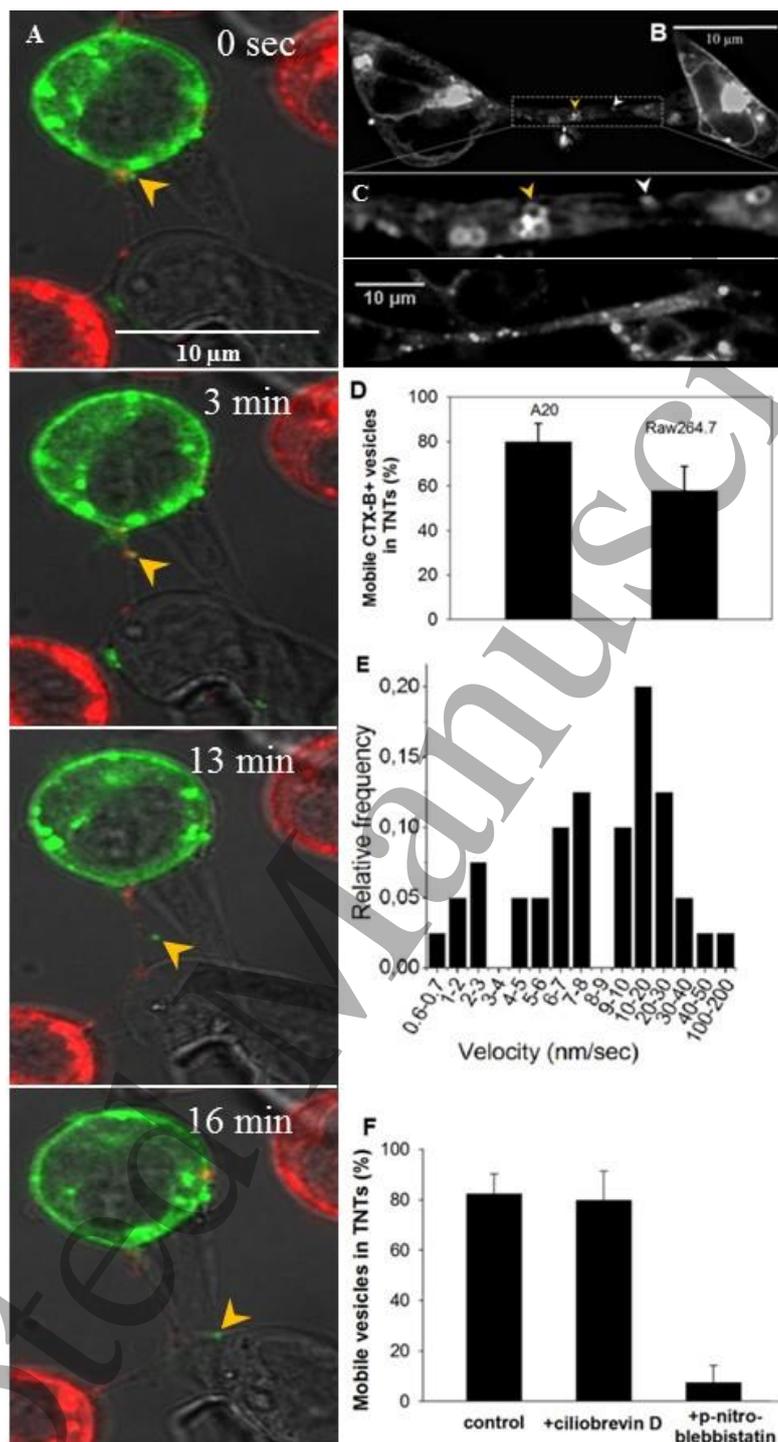
### 3.3 Intercellular transport of ganglioside-rich MVs between B cells and macrophages: actin-dependent myosin 2A but not dynein mediates this process

The live cell SR-SIM technology allowed us to record motional trajectories of single microvesicles and thus to analyze their transport properties across tunneling nanotubes bridging lymphocytes and macrophages (**Supplementary Movie 1**). The Alexa488-CTX-stained vesicles were shown to be transported to the neighboring cells (**Fig. 4**). Existence of such MVs in the intercellular conduits between B cells has already been shown by us (Osteikoetxea-Molnar, Szabo-Meleg et al. 2016), however their motional characteristics have not been analyzed, yet. A two color (green-red; Alexa488 vs. Alexa647), CTX-B labelled mixed culture of B cells was created in order to demonstrate the real intercellular exchange of vesicles. Nanotube formation and the exchange was analyzed by live cell CLSM with 63x magnification (or sometimes with monocolour superresolution SIM imaging). As **Fig. 4A** shows

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3 the vesicles formed in a mixed culture of green and red labelled B cells indeed arrive into the  
4 'target cells'. The **Supplementary Movie 2** convincingly demonstrates using a superior  
5 tracking analysis that a vesicle formed in a B cell (upper; 'donor cell') is transported via the  
6 intercellular NT bridge into another B cell (lower; 'acceptor cell'). A single microvesicle is  
7 typically transferred in ca. 16 min through the TNT. During a 2 hrs interval in culture, allowing  
8 live cell imaging without significant cell death, an actual intercellular exchange of 2-3  
9 microvesicles in average (mean $\pm$ -SD: 2 $\pm$ -2, from 49 independent fields of view) was  
10 observed between the B cells connected with NT conduits. **Fig. 4B** shows a section of a TNT  
11 connecting two B cells (upper part) and this region is zoomed in below (lower part). **Fig. 4C**  
12 is a similar zoomed image showing such moving CTX-B<sup>+</sup>-microvesicles in a TNT bridging  
13 two RAW264.7 macrophage cells.  
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16 As shown in **Fig. 4D** both B and macrophage cells can transport these microvesicles  
17 efficiently, since the percentage of mobile vesicles in TNTs were relatively high (ca. 80 and  
18 58%, respectively). Their motion in live cell time-lapse SR-SIM images was analyzed on the  
19 basis of their kymographic trajectories and found relatively diverse (**Fig. 4E**). Their average  
20 velocity in the nanotubes was found ca. 15 $\pm$ 3 nm/sec. Such velocity suggests that the process  
21 is likely not free diffusion, but rather mediated by a motor protein-cytoskeletal track system.  
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23 Non-muscle *myosin 2A* (NM2A) motor protein is abundantly expressed in lymphocytes  
24 (Osteikoetxea-Molnar, Szabo-Meleg et al. 2016), such as *dynein*, which is also a functionally  
25 essential motor protein in B cells, involved among others in internalization of the antigen  
26 receptor, BCR (Schnyder, Castello et al. 2011). So, next we investigated using live cell time-  
27 lapse SR-SIM imaging, whether inhibition of activities of these motor proteins can affect or  
28 not the transport of MVs across TNTs. Inhibition of microtubule associated dynein motor  
29 protein activity by ciliobrevin D (up to 20  $\mu$ M concentration) did not affect the transport of  
30 MVs, even after 20 minutes incubation (**Fig. 4F** and **Supplementary Movies 1, 3**). In the same  
31 time window, inhibition of myosin 2A, an actin-dependent motor protein, by p-nitro-  
32 blebbistatin (already at 40  $\mu$ M concentration), however, significantly blocked the motion of  
33 these vesicles in the tubules (**Fig. 4F** and **Supplementary Movies 1, 4**).  
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**Figure 4.** Traffic of ganglioside/CTX enriched microvesicles between B cells and macrophages.

The MVs formed after ganglioside/CTX-B internalization are transported across the TNTs grown under live cell conditions. The time lapse panel (A) is a series of representative CLSM images demonstrating this transport between two adjacent A20 murine B cells (total time: ca.16 min; for the actual position of the moving green vesicle, see the yellow arrowheads). Trajectory of the green-labelled vesicle moving from the donor to the recipient B cell via TNT can be seen in **Supplementary Movie 2**. Panel B shows zooming into a region of such B cells' TNTs (arrowheads point on individual MVs). A similar representative zoomed image of transported microvesicles along a TNT connecting RAW 264.7 macrophages is shown on panel C. Panel D demonstrates a relatively high mobility of intracellular MVs in both A20 B cells and RAW 264.7 macrophages. As shown in panel E, the mobile vesicles move with a highly diverse velocity, in the range of 0.6 to 200 nm/sec. Velocity distribution of microvesicles in the tubes was determined by analyzing their kymographic trajectories (FIJI

software MultipleKymograph plugin). Data showing the percentage of mobile vesicles/TNT revealed that treatment of B cell cultures with selective inhibitor of dynein motor protein (Ciliobrevin-D, at 20  $\mu$ M) did not influence, but with the inhibitor of actin-based myosin 2A motor protein (p-nitro-blebbistatin, at 40  $\mu$ M) significantly blocked the transport of such MVs (**Fig. 4F**). The mean  $\pm$  SD values of mobile vesicle % in TNTs determined from three independent experiments (ca. 20-30 TNTs in each samples) are displayed. (These inhibition experiments can also be seen in **Supplementary Movies 3-4**, with control, untreated cells on **Supplementary Movie 1**).

### 3.4. Transport of B7 family costimulatory molecules between TNT-connected B lymphocyte or macrophage cells

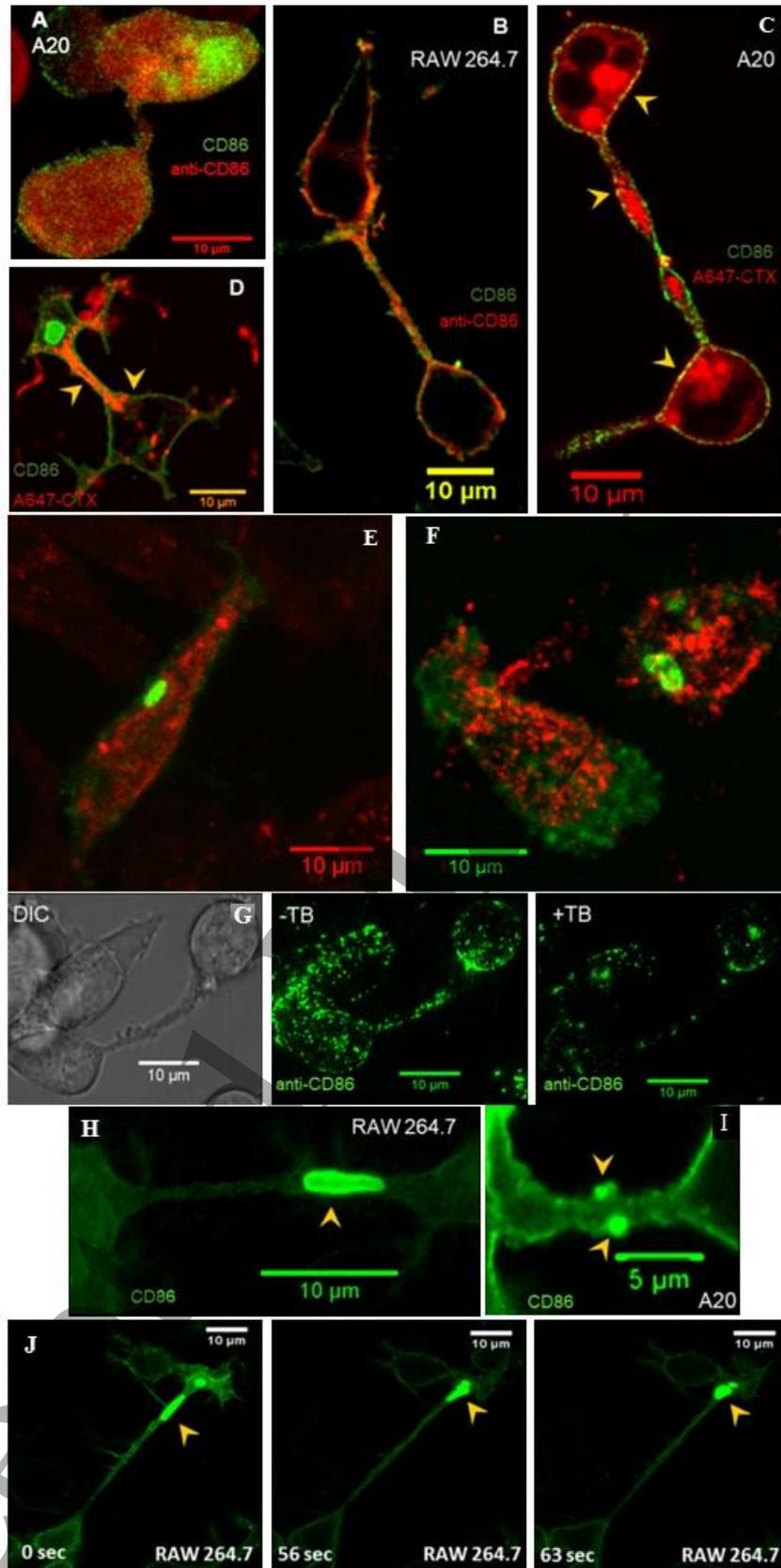
The actual membrane level of CD86 and CD80 B7-family proteins in B cells and especially in macrophages (where they have typically lower expression) essentially determines the capacity of these cells to activate helper or cytotoxic/killer T cells and the subsequent cellular immune response (Nurieva, Liu et al. 2009). Thus, it is an intriguing question whether these potential antigen-presenting cells can exchange CD86 costimulatory molecules via intercellular transport through nanotubular bridges. Recently we have shown existence of both MHC-II-peptide complexes and CD86 costimulatory membrane proteins in the nanotubes connecting adjacent B cells (Osteikoetxea-Molnar, Szabo-Meleg et al. 2016).

To investigate redistribution/motion of CD86 costimulatory molecules, in the present study we made fluorescent GFP-CD86 constructs and transfected them into murine B (A20) and macrophage (RAW 264.7) cells. Then, we analyzed spatial distribution of these fluorescent CD86 constructs and the way they are transported between two B or two macrophage cells.

Since both cell types constitutively express endogenous CD86, as well, although at different level (macrophages express significantly less CD86), first we tried to visualize how the transfected green fluorescent CD86 relates spatially to the endogenous CD86 stained by red immunocytochemical (antibody) labeling using permeabilization/fixation of the cells. In B cells (**Fig. 5A**) the endogenous CD86 (red) shows a more dispersed distribution in the cytoplasm (reflecting also CD86+ intracellular vesicles in which they are transported to the plasma membrane after their synthesis) than in macrophages where their synthesis/expression is much lower (**Fig. 5B**). In both cells the transfected GFP-CD86 (green) mostly appears in the plasma membrane or in macrophages rarely in large vesicular compartments (**Fig. 5A, B and D**).

Since it also remained an open question whether in B cells or macrophages these CD86 costimulatory transmembrane proteins can be associated or not with the ganglioside-rich CTX-B+-microvesicles mentioned earlier, next we investigated how the transfected green CD86 molecules relate spatially to the red-CTX-B marked ganglioside-rich microvesicles. As **Fig. 5C and D** show, there is some level of colocalization between the MVs and the GFP-CD86 (see arrowheads), while some disparate, heavily loaded CD86 compartments (large 'microvesicle-like' structures) could also be observed, but only in macrophages (**Fig. 5D**). This suggests that in B cells and macrophages the intracellular compartmentation and trafficking of the transfected GFP-CD86 proteins may be largely different. In macrophages we investigated by immunocytochemical staining of Caveolin-1, a specific structural protein and widely accepted marker of caveolas, whether the transfected CD86 is compartmented in caveolas. As shown in **Fig. 5E,F** no colocalization is observed between the GFP-CD86 molecules and the red colored antibody labeling caveolin-1, suggesting that the GFP-CD86 complexes are not internalized with Cav-mediated pathways (Pearson colocalization coefficient:  $-0,05867 \pm 0,21603$ ). As a control, **Fig. 5G** shows that if the endogenous CD86 is labelled extracellularly by antibody (green, in the middle) in B cells (DIC image on left), we see an intensive membrane labeling that can be fully quenched by 0.1% trypan blue (TB) (right).

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3 Interestingly enough, the intercellular transport of GFP-CD86 in B cells and  
4 macrophages showed a highly different picture. In mature B cells the CD86 transmembrane  
5 protein seemed to be transported intercellularly in the membrane of the tunneling nanotubes,  
6 rather than in the interior of TNTs (**Fig. 5I** and **Supplementary Movie 5**). In contrast, in  
7 macrophages, the GFP-CD86 seems to be localized in large 'microvesicle-like' compartments  
8 inside the cells, and their intercellular transport also takes place in such elongated (ca. 3-4  $\mu\text{m}$   
9 long and 0.7-0.8  $\mu\text{m}$  thick) structures (**Fig. 5H, J** and **Supplementary Movie 6**). Whatever is  
10 the exact mechanism of the transport, our results point out that both B cells and macrophages  
11 are able to exchange B7-family costimulatory proteins via nanotubular connections.  
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**Figure 5.** Distribution and intercellular transport of GFP-CD86 protein in macrophages and B cells. GFP-CD86 constructs were transfected into RAW 264.7 macrophage and A20 B cells, respectively. Then cells were visualized under live cell conditions (37 °C, 5% CO<sub>2</sub> atmosphere on 10 µg/ml fibronectin coat) by confocal or SR-SIM microscopy. **A:** Colocalization of endogenous CD86 (labeled by anti-CD86 antibody+Alexa594-secondary Ab; red) with transfected GFP-CD86 (green) in A20 B cells. Panel **B** demonstrates that colocalization

of endogenous (red) and transfected GFP-CD86 (green) in Raw 264.7 macrophages is remarkable. **C**: Colocalization of GFP-CD86 (green) with Alexa647-CTX-B (red) both in B cells and macrophages could be observed mainly in the plasma membrane of the cells and at some points in the membrane of the nanotubes as shown by panels **C** and **D**. (representative CLSM images). In panels **E** and **F** colocalization of Caveolin-1 (red), a specific protein of caveolas with the transfected GFP-CD86 (green) demonstrates that this CD86 complexes are not internalized with Caveolin-mediated pathways (Pearson colocalization coefficient:  $-0,05867 \pm 0,21603$ , showed no correlation between Caveolin-1 and GFP-CD86). Representative SR-SIM images of anti-CD86 primary+anti-rat Alexa488 secondary antibodies labelled A20 cells before (*middle*) and after (*right*) 0.1% trypan-blue (TB) addition demonstrate the extracellular quenching effect of TB on membrane labeling, while the internal fluorescence was left unchanged as shown by panel **G**. **Fig 5I** clearly proves that intercellular transport of GFP-CD86 between B cells takes place dominantly in the membrane wall of TNTs (representative, zoomed CLSM image; see also Supplementary Movie 5), while in macrophages it takes place dominantly within the TNT in large, elongated 'microvesicle-like' structures as shown by representative, zoomed SR-SIM image) in panel **H**. Panel **J** is a time lapse live cell CLSM image series about the transport of GFP-CD86 in MV-like structures, inside the TNTs in macrophages (see also Supplementary Movie 6).

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Membrane nanotubes (Gerdes, Bukoreshtliev et al. 2007, Davis and Sowinski 2008) and extracellular vesicles (Thery, Ostrowski et al. 2009, Gyorgy, Szabo et al. 2011) are recently recognized novel intercellular communication/transport pathways. Their appearance and potential functional significance were described in many cell types of the immune- and central nervous systems, kidney cells or various tumor cell types (Austefjord, Gerdes et al. 2014). Because of their potential to control cell differentiation, survival, signal transduction, or other secondary cell responses, nanotubular connections gained special attention in the fields of immunology, neurobiology and especially in tumor biology.

Earlier findings from our and other groups (Kabaso, Lokar et al. 2011, Lokar, Kabaso et al. 2012, Osteikoetxea-Molnar, Szabo-Meleg et al. 2016, Toth, Oszvald et al. 2017) showed that formation of nanotubes strongly depends on GM<sub>1</sub>/GM<sub>3</sub> ganglioside and cholesterol content of the plasma membranes. Our recent model (Toth, Oszvald et al. 2017) proposed that the actual number of plasma membrane lipid rafts, as coupling sites between the plasma membrane and F-actin may be an essential factor determining the number of potentially outgrowing nanotubules. Membrane gangliosides GM<sub>1</sub> and GM<sub>3</sub>, however, are also important in immune cells, as receptors of bacterial toxins, such as various enterotoxins or Cholera toxin (Holmgren and Lindholm 1976, Kregel and Bousquet 2014) with which they may meet frequently. Therefore, it is an intriguing question what happens with the target cells (such as B, T lymphocytes or macrophages) upon engagement of these surface gangliosides by bacterial toxins, such as Cholera toxin. The immature B cells (e.g. the 38C13 cell line) investigated here express much less gangliosides than the mature ones and could not grow nanotubes under the same conditions as the mature B cells did (Toth, Oszvald et al. 2017).

In this study we demonstrate that Cholera toxin B challenge of B cells of immature and mature types leads to formation of small microvesicles through internalization of GM<sub>1</sub>/GM<sub>3</sub> ganglioside-rich plasma membrane fractions of the cells into their cytoplasm. Internalization starts shortly after the CTX-B treatment and reaches its peaks after approximately 30 minutes. Note that the extent of internalization was different in immature and mature B cells. Immature B cells form much less MV structures with a lower rate than the mature ones, in accordance with their lower GM<sub>1</sub>/GM<sub>3</sub> expression level (Toth, Oszvald et al. 2017) in their plasma membrane. However, the exact biological role and the molecular machinery of such MV-formation still remained unclear. Nonetheless, our data highlight an important point that only mature B cells can respond to bacterial toxins with signaling (Schnitzler, Burke et al. 2007) and/or intercellular communication/microvesicle-transport. Our data also point out that such



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3 difference in the plasma membrane lipid composition (in the levels of gangliosides or in other  
4 lipid species promoting proper membrane curvature; as reported by Toth EA et al. 2017) may  
5 affect not only the extent of nanotube formation, but also the subsequent microvesicle  
6 formation, after internalization.  
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8 Live cell SR-SIM superresolution imaging (Vangindertael, Camacho et al. 2018)  
9 technique with its improved lateral resolution ( $d \sim 80\text{-}90\text{ nm}$ ) provided valuable novel  
10 information about the characteristic properties (e.g. morphology, size- and velocity-  
11 distribution) of these MVs and about their transport through the TNTs connecting these  
12 immune cells. We demonstrated here that SR-SIM can sufficiently monitor the intercellular  
13 transport of these microvesicles, using both tracking and kymographic analysis of their  
14 motional trajectories. Analyzing their tracks and velocity distribution in the TNTs, we found  
15 that they move bidirectionally with a relatively low velocity (15-20 nm/s, in average). Such  
16 velocities suggest that they may be transported as cargos mediated by actin- or microtubule-  
17 associated motor protein activities. Our data strongly suggest that the dominant motor protein  
18 mediating this transport, is the actin-dependent non-muscle myosin 2A in these cells.  
19 According to our results, the other abundant, microtubule-associated motor protein in B cells,  
20 dynein, was not involved in their transfer. This observation highlights the possibility of  
21 modulating such nanotubular intercellular transport e.g. by specific targeting of a motor protein  
22 to inhibit its cargo-transport. The low number of MVs transported intercellularly between B  
23 cells is likely due to the fact that adjacent B cells are often connected by more than one  
24 nanotube, and these can be either thin (with closed end) or thick (open ended, or tunneling)  
25 NTs (Osteikoetxea-Molnar et al, 2016, Cell MolLife Sci.). In contrast to the cell tracking dyes  
26 (DiI, DiD or DiO), staining the NTs basically uniformly, the FL-CTX-B challenge induces  
27 vesiculation and internalization after binding to cell surface gangliosides, regardless of the  
28 color of conjugated dye to CTX-B, and many of the vesicle-cargos formed this way may not  
29 reach the target cells because of the closed end of some NTs.  
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33 Beyond being a 'passive' platform of hijacking molecules, prions, viruses or for surfing  
34 bacteria, membrane nanotubes may also serve as active 'communication channels'. It was e.g.  
35 demonstrated that immune cells can exchange protein (or lipid) molecules through the process  
36 called 'trocytosis' that can on the other hand affect many stages of the immune response,  
37 e.g. effector responses of lymphocytes, cell killing, cell death/homeostasis, etc. (Onfelt,  
38 Nedvetzki et al. 2004, Davis and Sowinski 2008, Davis 2009).  
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40 The intercellular transport pathways shown here arise an important question: what  
41 might be the biological significance of the molecular transport across TNTs between the same  
42 or different cell types? So far, we know that the cells may inform each other about lack of  
43 energy (compensated e.g. by transfer of mitochondria) or tumor cells may transfer even  
44 resistance factors to each other via NTs (Osswald, Jung et al. 2015). Immune cells may transfer  
45 this way to each other molecules in the TNT membrane or inside the tube, packed in  
46 microvesicles, that may modulate (either activate or inhibit) different steps of the adaptive  
47 immune response (Thery, Ostrowski et al. 2009, Gyorgy, Szabo et al. 2011). Such intercellular  
48 transport processes described in the present study may result in the so called "cross-dressing"  
49 of the connected cells (Dhainaut and Moser 2014, Campana, De Pasquale et al. 2015, Zaccard,  
50 Watkins et al. 2015, Zaccard, Rinaldo et al. 2016), especially of antigen presenting cells  
51 (APCs), which may lead to a more efficient antigen presentation and T cell activation,  
52 important for an efficient cellular immune response.  
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54 Our results also pointed on the differences in intracellular compartmentation, traffic  
55 and intercellular transport via TNTs of the GFP-CD86 costimulatory protein in B cells vs.  
56 macrophages. In B cells these proteins are transported dominantly along the membrane of the  
57 TNTs, while in macrophages the transfected GFP-CD86 appears to form special intracellular  
58 compartments, in highly dense, large 'microvesicle-like' structures and intercellularly  
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3 transported in these unusual, elongated structures inside the TNTs. We do not know yet what  
4 is the reason of this difference, but it is likely due to the different internalization pathways, and  
5 intracellular protein storage/compartimentation mechanisms in macrophages and B cells,  
6 respectively (see e.g. the unusually high density of CD86 in the ‘microvesicle-like’ structures  
7 in macrophages) (Biswas, Biswas et al. 2009, Xu, Barnes et al. 2010). A dynamic intracellular  
8 CD86 reservoir described and characterized earlier (Smyth, Logan et al. 1998, Smyth, Logan  
9 et al. 2005) showing a cell-type specific subcellular compartmentation of CD86 seems to  
10 support our findings regarding the differences in the transportation mechanisms.  
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13 Regardless of the exact mechanism, which obviously needs further examination, the  
14 presented work explored that both B cells and macrophages (as potential antigen presenting  
15 cells) can exchange CD86, a centrally important costimulator in T cell activation, via  
16 nanotubular connections. Our findings helped to reveal new aspects of intercellular transport  
17 of immunoregulatory factors and hence to recognize novel potential immunomodulation  
18 pathways. Exact identification of all the significant immunoregulatory components carried by  
19 the ganglioside-rich, CTX-B+ microvesicles described here, of course is another important  
20 task, which needs further detailed investigations. Our results otherwise also highlighted the  
21 power of SR-SIM (or other) superresolution imaging techniques (Vangindertael, Camacho et  
22 al. 2018) over live cell confocal microscopy in revealing ‘submicroscopic’ structural or kinetic  
23 details of novel biological transport pathway, such as microvesicle transport via intercellular  
24 nanotubular networks.  
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## Acknowledgements

This work was supported by grants K104971, NN 107776 and K112794 from National Research Development and Innovation Office (NKFIH). This work was also supported by the ÚNKP-17-4-IV New National Excellence Program of the Ministry of Human Capacities (to SzME), the GINOP-2.3.2-15-2016-00036, and the EFOP-3.6.1-16-2016-00004. ZB is a Bolyai Research Fellow. The authors would like to thank to Nóra Henn-Mike for her assistance in endogenous CD86 labeling and to Dr. Glória László for the helpful advice in works with CD86 and the continuous valuable discussions.

The present scientific contribution is dedicated to the 650th anniversary of the foundation of the University of Pécs, Hungary.

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