Galectin-9 reflects the interferon signature and correlates with disease activity in systemic autoimmune diseases. Response to: ‘Biomarkers: to be or not to be’ by Yavuz and Rönnblom

With much interest, we read the comments of our colleagues Yavuz and Rönnblom regarding our manuscript on galectin-9 as an easy to measure biomarker to detect the interferon (IFN) signature in patients with systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE) and antiphospholipid syndrome (APS). We thank them for their interest in our manuscript and their shared interest in the importance of the IFN signature in SLE and the subsequent need for more easily applicable markers to detect IFN activity. In the paper, we reported independently replicated correlations of galectin-9 with the IFN signature in patients with SLE and APS. The aim of our manuscript was to identify more easy to measure markers to detect the IFN signature. Besides serving as a marker for the IFN signature, we found that galectin-9 was elevated in patients with SLE and APS and correlated with signs of disease activity including SLEDAI.

We agree with the authors that the use of galectin-9 as a marker for IFN activity needs further confirmation before clinical implementation, and studies in which longitudinal samples and patients with different ethnic backgrounds are tested are among the next steps. Other candidates include the direct measurement of IFNs by digital ELISA, although these tested are among the next steps. Other candidates include the samples and patients with different ethnic backgrounds are clinical implementation, and studies in which longitudinal marker for IFN activity needs further confirmation before correlated with signs of disease activity including SLEDAI.

Therefore, serum levels of galectin-9 are a promising marker to assess the IFN signature and correlate with changes in disease activity in patients with different autoimmune diseases.

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Figure 1 Increased circulating levels of galectin-9 in patients with pSS are associated with disease activity and serum IgG. Galectin-9 levels were measured in the serum of HC (n=14), patients with nSS (n=13) and patients with pSS (n=46) by Luminox multianalyte measurements. Patients with pSS had clearly increased circulating levels of Gal-9 compared with nSS and HC donors (A). In patients with pSS, serum Gal-9 levels correlated with ESSDAI and serum IgG (B). Differences between the groups were assessed using Kruskal-Wallis test with posthoc Dunn’s multiple comparisons test, correlations were assessed using Spearman’s correlation coefficient. ESSDAI, EULAR Sjögren’s Syndrome Disease Activity Index; HC, healthy controls; nSS, non-Sjögren’s sicca; pSS, primary Sjögren’s syndrome.
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