

Impact of RAL/MVC Intensification With or Without HIV-rAd5 Vaccination on HIV DNA: EraMune 02

Chad Achenbach¹, Steven Deeks², Timothy Wilkin³, Baiba Berzins¹, Joseph Casazza⁴, Sidonie Lambert⁵, Lambert Assoumou⁶, Christine Katlama⁷, Brigitte Autran⁸, Robert Murphy¹, and the EraMune 02 Study Group

¹Northwestern University, Chicago, USA; ²University of California – San Francisco, USA; ³Cornell University, New York, USA; ⁴Vaccine Research Center (VRC), NIAID/NIH, Bethesda, USA; ⁵Laboratory of Virology, UPMC/INSERM, Paris, France; ⁶Center of Methodology, UPMC/INSERM, Paris, France; ⁷Department of Infectious and Tropical Diseases, Pitié-Salpêtrière Hospital, Paris, France; ⁸Laboratory of Cellular and Tissue Immunology, UPMC/INSERM, Paris, France

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BACKGROUND: HIV eradication may require synergistic interventions that purge latent reservoirs and increase the HIV-specific cellular immune response. DNA prime followed by recombinant adenovirus 5 boost vaccination (HIV-rAd5) has been shown to induce strong CD8+ cytotoxic T lymphocyte responses in HIV-infected and uninfected individuals.

METHODOLOGY: Randomized, controlled, non-comparative clinical trial of ART intensification (raltegravir and maraviroc (RAL/MVC)) with or without HIV-rAd5. We included patients having: ≥3 years of HIV-1 RNA ≤500 copies/mL, HIV-1 RNA <40 copies/mL zone year, current CD4+ cell count ≥350/mm³, HIV-1 DNA between 10 and 1,000 copies/10⁶ PBMCs and serum Ad5 neutralizing antibody titer ≤ 250. After a lead-in of RAL/MVC intensification for 8 weeks, patients were randomized (1:1) to continue intensification with HIV-rAd5 vaccination (DNA prime at W8-W12-W16 and rAd5 boost at W32 (RAL/MVC/HIV-rAd5 arm)) or continue intensification alone (RAL/MVC arm) for 48 weeks. The primary end-point was >0.5 log₁₀ decrease in HIV-1 DNA at 56 weeks. Secondary end-points included changes in rectal tissue HIV-1 DNA, immunologic changes in peripheral blood and rectal tissue, and safety.

RESULTS: We enrolled 28 patients (14 in each arm) on suppressive ART with the following median baseline characteristics: 636 CD4+ cells/mm³, 672 CD8+ cells/mm³, 170 HIV-1 RNA copies/10⁶ PBMCs, 13 years on ART, and 2.6 years with HIV-1 RNA <40 copies/mL. At week 56, one patient in the RAL/MVC alone arm reached the primary endpoint with a 0.55 log₁₀ decrease in HIV-1 DNA from 156 (W0) to 44 (W56) DNA copies/10⁶ PBMCs. Mean PBMC and rectal tissue cell-associated HIV-1 DNA levels did not significantly change after RAL/MVC intensification with or without HIV-rAd5 injections (see table 3). Peripheral blood CD4+ and CD8+ cell counts did not significantly change from baseline to W56 in either arm (see table 4). RAL/MVC intensification and HIV-rAd5 vaccination were well tolerated and there were no serious SAEs related to study treatment.

CONCLUSIONS: RAL/MVC intensification with HIV-rAd5 vaccination did not reduce the total HIV DNA reservoir in either peripheral blood or rectal tissue. RAL/MVC intensification alone decreased the HIV-1 reservoir by over 0.5 log DNA copies/10⁶ PBMCs in one patient.

Background

Eradication of HIV from an infected individual cannot be achieved by current potent antiretroviral therapy (ART). HIV eradication may require synergistic interventions that purge latent reservoirs and increase the HIV-specific immune response. DNA prime followed by recombinant adenovirus 5 boost vaccination (HIV-rAd5) has been shown to induce strong CD8+ cytotoxic T lymphocyte responses in HIV-infected and uninfected individuals. Our hypothesis was that viral eradication in selected HIV-infected patients is possible with intensification of ART plus immunomodulation with DNA prime/HIV-rAd5 boost vaccine.

Methods

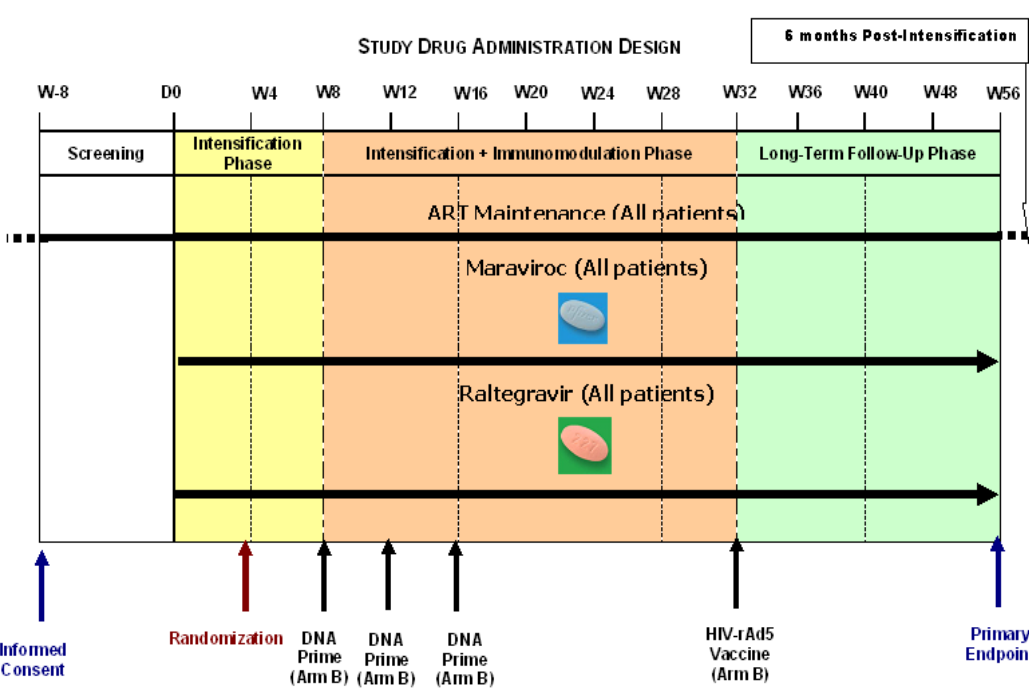
The EraMune 02 trial was a multicenter, randomized, non-comparative controlled study of ART intensification plus DNA prime/HIV-rAd5 boost vaccine in HIV-1 infected patients with long-term viral suppression.

Study design

After a lead-in of raltegravir/maraviroc (RAL/MVC) intensification for 8 weeks, subjects were randomized (1:1):

ARM A (RAL/MVC): Continue intensification alone for 48 weeks

ARM B (RAL/MVC + DNA prime/HIV-rAd5 boost): Continue intensification for 48 weeks + DNA prime/HIV-rAd5 boost vaccination [3 injections of HIV DNA prime coding for clade B Gag, Pol, and Nef and clade A, B, and C Env, followed by a replication-deficient adenovirus type 5 boost encoding all DNA vaccine antigens except Nef]



Eligibility Criteria

- Adults (≥18 and <70 years) with HIV-1 infection
- ≥3 years of HIV RNA ≤500 copies/mL and HIV-1 RNA <40 copies/mL ≥ one year
- 10 ≤ Provirial DNA ≤ 1000 copies/10⁶ PBMCs within 75 days of entry
- CD4+ count ≥ 350 cells/mm³ within 60 days of entry
- Adenovirus neutralizing antibody titer ≤ 250
- Not previously exposed to immunologic therapeutic intervention and no active hepatitis B or C

Methods

- As in phase II cancer trials, with 14 evaluable patients in the intervention arms, if no patient succeeds, it means that the success rate is lower than 20% and the strategy is not worth pursuing. If there is at least one response, then additional studies are needed
- Success was defined as a decrease from baseline in HIV proviral DNA at week 56 of at least 0.5 log copies/10⁶ PBMCs
- Cell HIV-DNA was quantified by ultrasensitive real-time polymerase chain reaction (PCR) (Generic HIV DNA Cell, Biocentric@Kit)
- T-cell responses to vaccine antigens were determined using a validated ELISpot assay
- Patients were monitored every 4 weeks for 56 weeks
- One additional visit follow-up was performed at week 80 (off all interventions)
- Wilcoxon paired test was used to compare the change in continuous variables between baseline, week 56, and week 80 in each arm

Results

Figure 1: Patient Flowchart

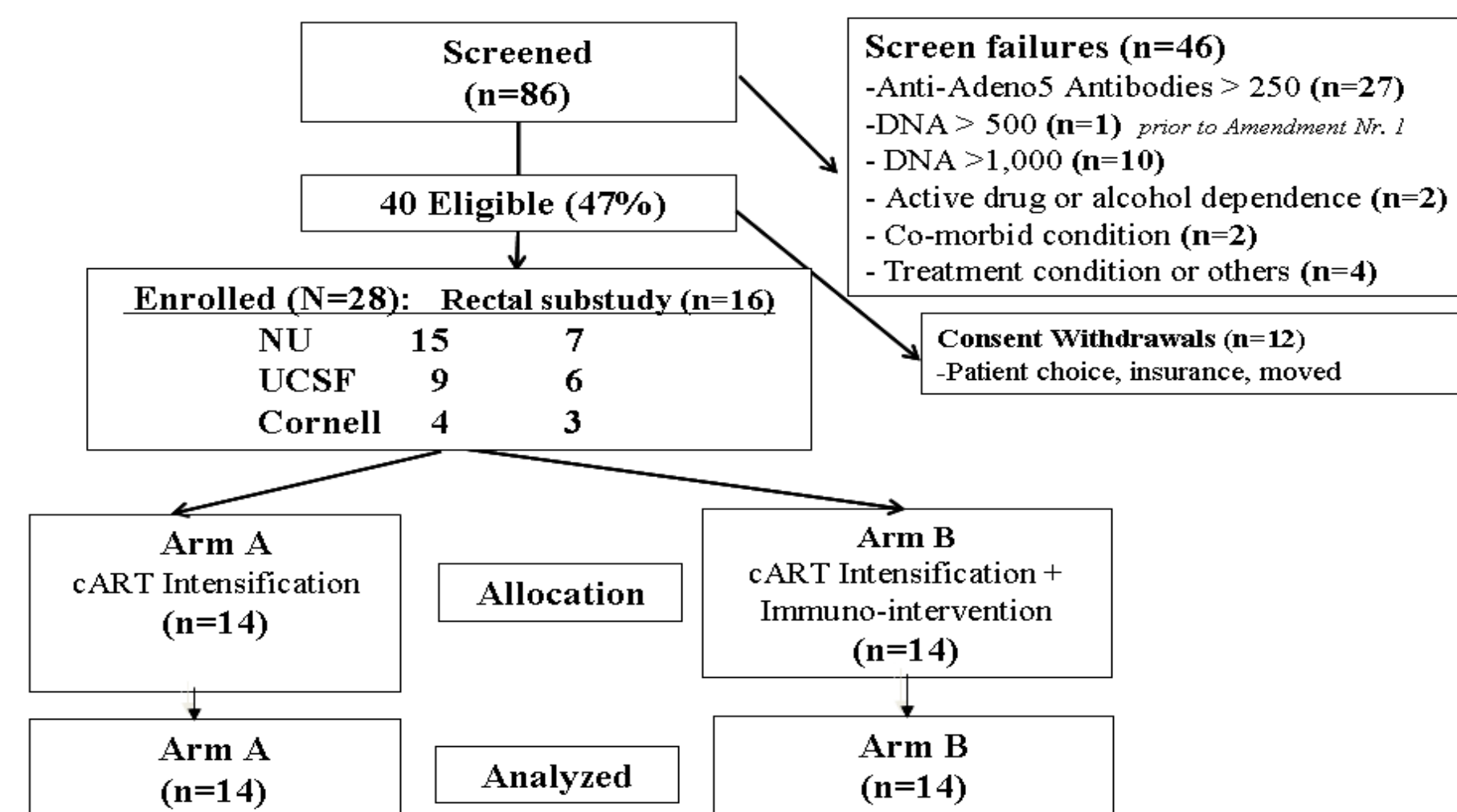


Table 1: Baseline Characteristics

| Median (IQR) | RAL/MVC (n = 14) | RAL/MVC+ HIV-rAd5 (n = 14) | Total (n = 28) |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| Age, years | 49 (46-55) | 50 (46 – 55) | 50 (46 – 55) |
| Sex, % Male | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Race, % White | 79% | 64% | 71% |
| Time on cART, years | 13 (8 – 19) | 13 (6 – 19) | 13 (8 – 19) |
| Prior AIDS events, n (%) | 3 (21 %) | 3 (21 %) | 6 (21 %) |
| CD4 nadir (cells/mm ³) | 220 (146 - 419) | 179 (50 - 219) | 202 (88 - 280) |
| CD4 count (cells/mm ³) | 686 (501 - 880) | 563 (468 – 718) | 636 (485 – 791) |
| CD8 count (cells/mm ³) | 625 (475 – 925) | 719 (535 – 796) | 672 (516 – 817) |
| Adeno-5 antibody titer | 18 (12-68) | 12 (12-38) | 12 (12-41) |
| VL <50 cp/mL, % | 100% | 100% | 100% |
| Duration of VL < 50 cp/mL (years) | 2.4 (2.3 – 3.1) | 2.7 (2.1 – 3.0) | 2.6 (2.2 – 3.0) |
| HIV DNA copies/10 ⁶ PBMCs | 97(47 – 352) | 228 (98 – 383) | 170 (60 – 361) |
| ART regimen, n (%) | | | |
| -2 NRTIs + PI/r | 4 (39 %) | 7 (50 %) | 11 (39 %) |
| -2 NRTIs + NNRTI | 10 (71 %) | 5 (36 %) | 15 (54 %) |
| -NRTI+NNRTI+PI/r | | 1 (4 %) | 1 (4 %) |
| -NNRTI + PI | | 1 (7 %) | 1 (4 %) |

Table 2: Safety -- Serious Adverse Events

| Study Treatment | Serious Adverse Event | Related to Study Treatment | Outcome |
|--------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| RAL/MVC | Creatinine Kinase (Gr. 4) | Possible (RAL) | Resolved without sequel |
| RAL/MVC + HIV-rAd5 | Acute coronary syndrome | No (Hx of CAD) | Stents placed |
| RAL/MVC + HIV-rAd5 | Renal Failure | Unlikely (only temporal association with HIV-rAd5 boost) | Hemodialysis |
| RAL/MVC + HIV-rAd5 | Deep Vein Thrombosis | No | Resolved without sequel |

- No severe, moderate or systemic post-vaccine reactions to either DNA prime or HIV-rAd5 boost
- Patients reported mild post-vaccine reactions including tenderness, redness, and swelling at injection site

Figure 2: Change in HIV DNA (log₁₀ copies/10⁶ PBMCs)

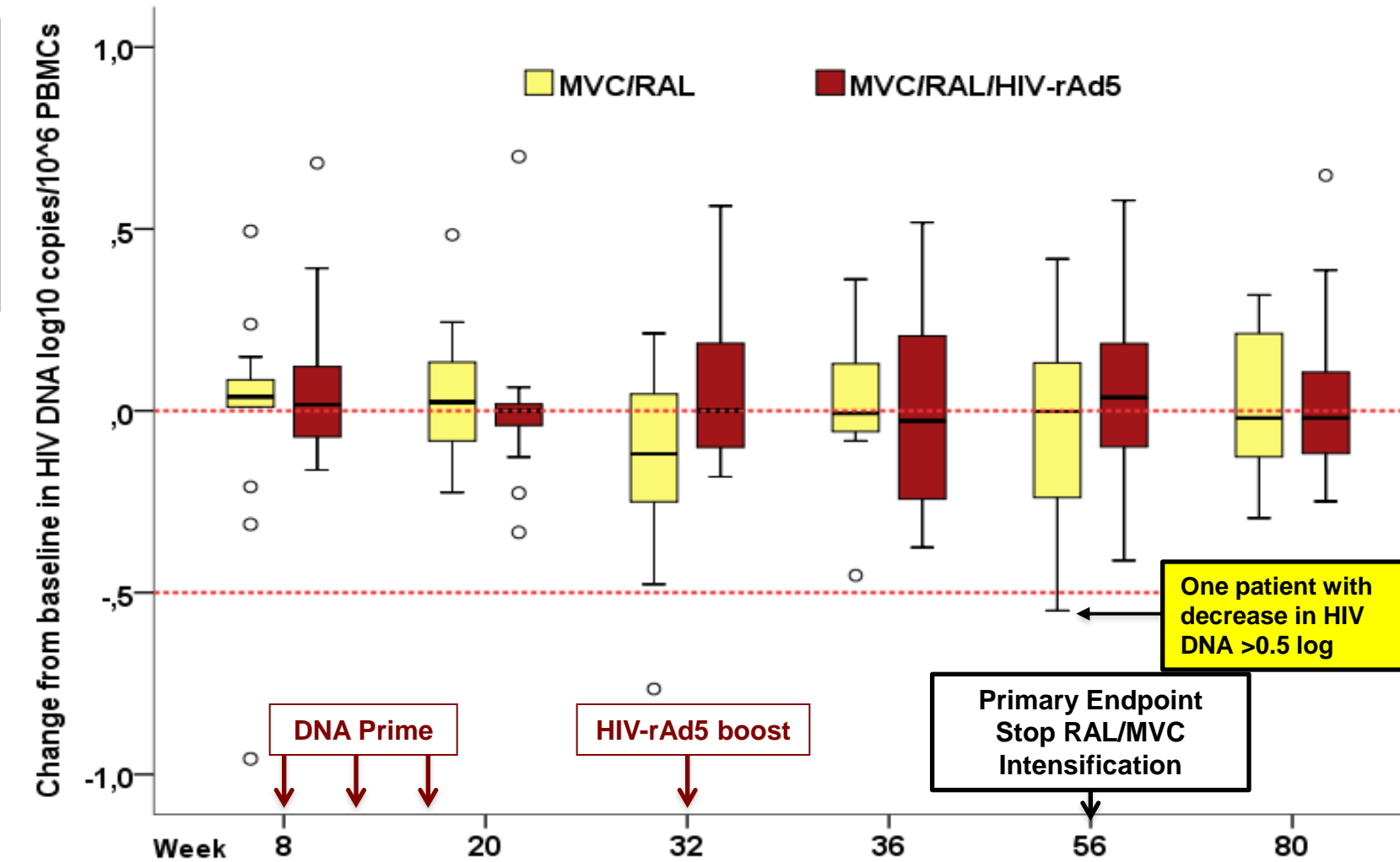


Figure 3: Change in CD4 count (cells/mm³)

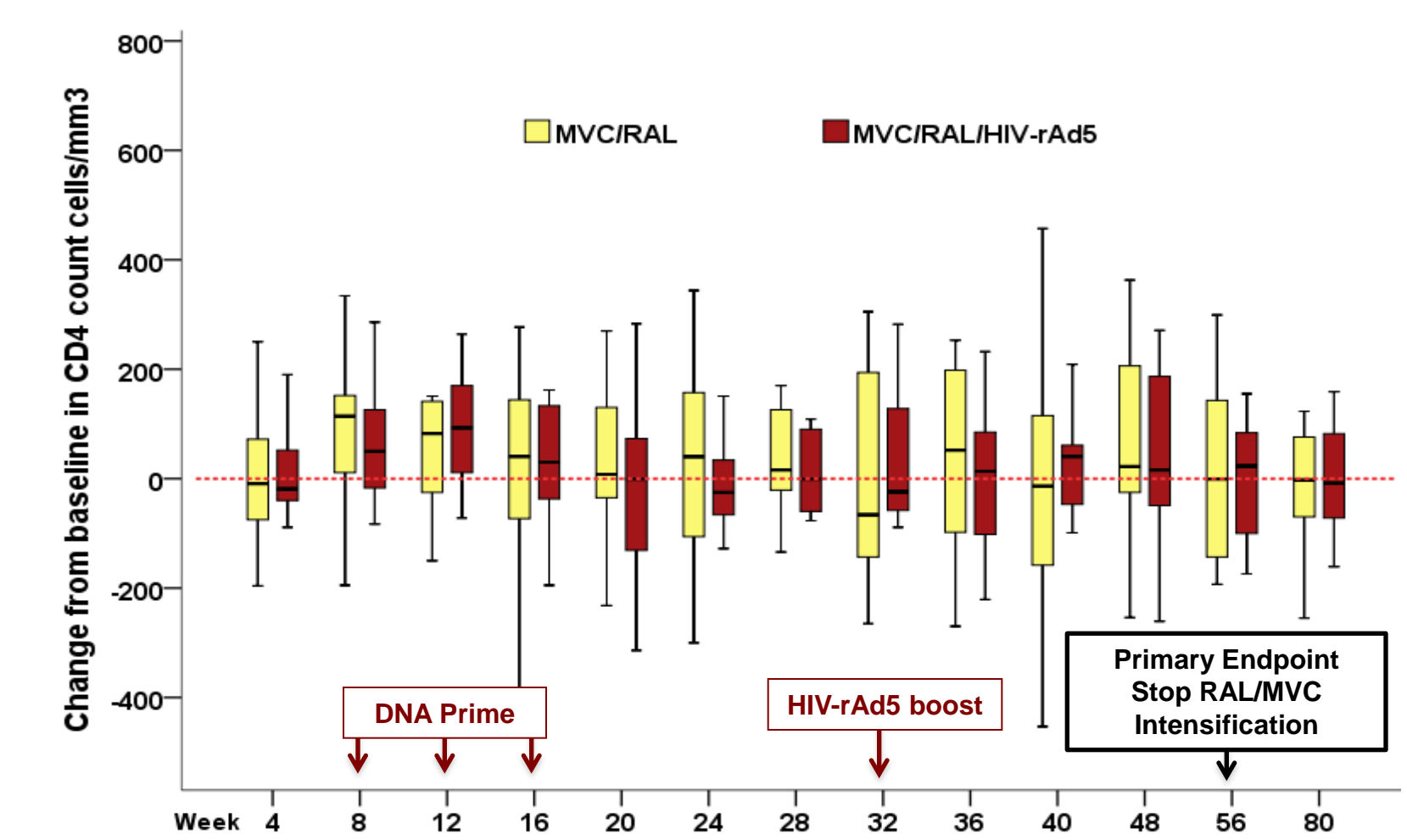


Figure 4: HIV specific T-cell responses

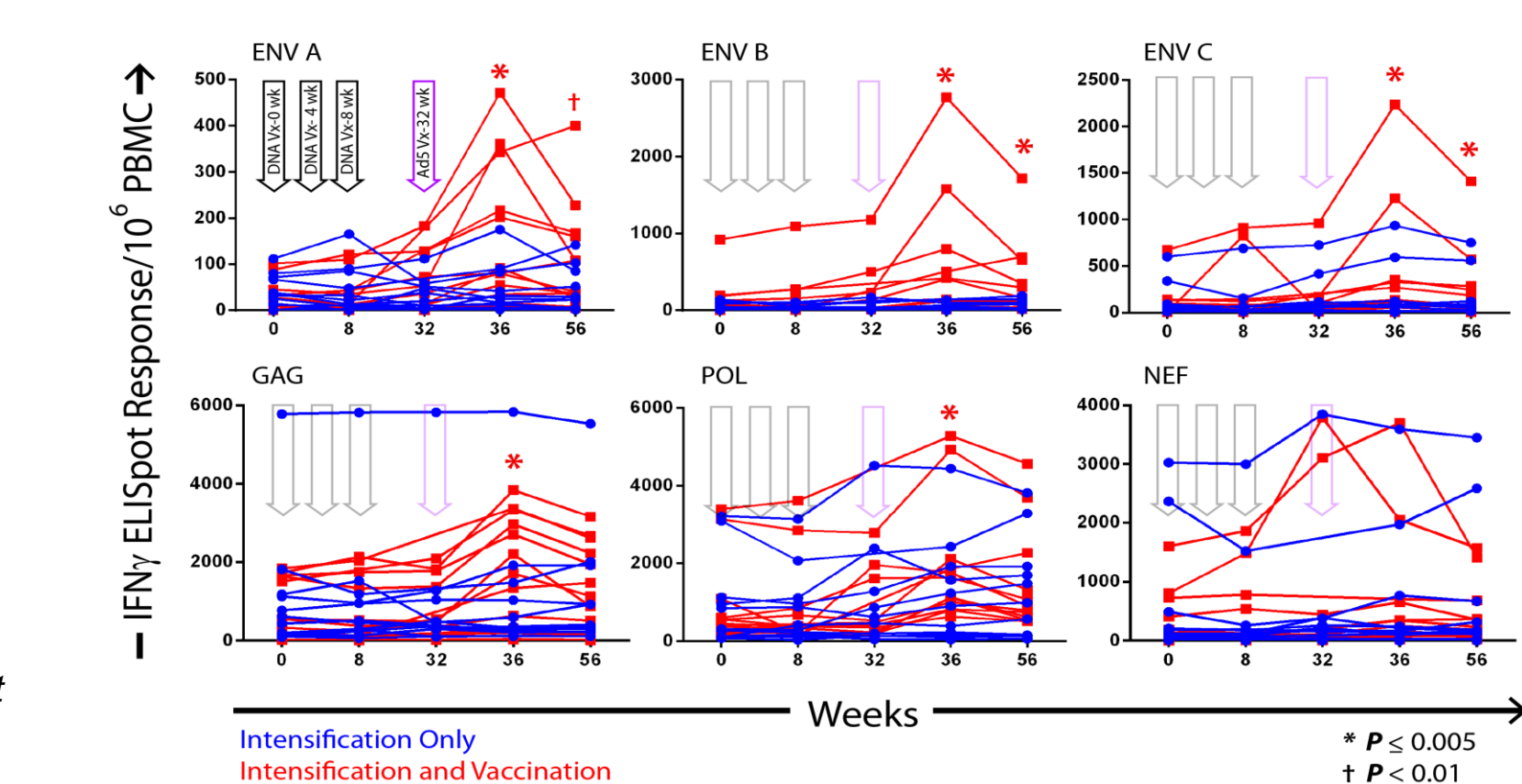


Table 3: Median (IQR) Change in HIV DNA (Baseline to Week 56) in Blood Compartments and Rectal Tissue

| | | W0 | W56 | Δ W56-W0 | p-value (W0 vs W56) |
|--|--------------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| HIV DNA log ₁₀ copies per million PBMCs | RAL/MVC (n= 14) | 2.32 (2.11-2.51) | 2.33 (1.98-2.60) | 0.00 (-0.29-0.16) | 0.730 |
| | RAL/MVC+ HIV-rAD5 (n=14) | 2.46 (2.17-2.94) | 2.58 (2.09-2.97) | 0.04 (-0.11-0.10) | 0.463 |
| HIV DNA log ₁₀ copies per million CD4 cells | RAL/MVC (n= 12) | 2.62 (2.43-2.87) | 2.63 (2.39-3.04) | -0.02 (-0.24-0.20) | 0.754 |
| | RAL/MVC+ HIV-rAD5 (n=12) | 2.84 (2.44-3.21) | 2.87 (2.23-3.31) | -0.02 (-0.17-0.18) | 0.937 |
| HIV DNA log ₁₀ copies/mL Whole blood | RAL/MVC (n= 12) | 2.68 (2.50-3.01) | 2.72 (2.52-3.04) | -0.06 (-0.25-0.28) | 1.000 |
| | RAL/MVC+ HIV-rAD5 (n=12) | 2.78 (2.40-3.16) | 2.86 (2.14-3.24) | 0.07 (-0.23-0.16) | 1.000 |
| HIV DNA log ₁₀ copies/mL (mean (SD) change) Rectal tissue | RAL/MVC (n= 7) | 2.12 (0.42) | 2.26 (0.39) | 0.14 (0.27) | 0.176 |
| | RAL/MVC+ HIV-rAD5 (n=6) | 2.38 (0.58) | 2.44 (0.29) | 0.06 (0.37) | 0.917 |

Table 4: Mean (SD) Changes in CD4/CD8 Count (Baseline to Week 56)

| Cell count/mm ³ | | W0 | W56 | Δ W56-W0 | p-value (W0 vs W56) |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Total CD4 | RAL/MVC (n= 14) | 749 (221) | 799 (315) | 50 (248) | 0.889 |
| | RAL/MVC+ HIV-rAD5 (n=14) | 578 (148) | 583 (151) | 5 (112) | 0.972 |
| Total CD8 | RAL/MVC (n= 12) | 821 (407) | 856 (363) | 35 (248) | 0.889 |
| | RAL/MVC+ HIV-rAD5 (n=12) | 750 (334) | 717 (308) | -33 (150) | 0.600 |
| CD4/CD8 Ratio | RAL/MVC (n= 12) | 1.24 (0.99) | 1.15 (0.78) | -0.09 (0.31) | 0.972 |
| | RAL/MVC+ HIV-rAD5 (n=12) | 0.93 (0.47) | 0.92 (0.39) | -0.01 (0.14) | 0.753 |

Conclusions

- RAL/MVC intensification with or without HIV-rAd5 vaccination **did not significantly reduce the total HIV DNA reservoir in either peripheral blood or rectal tissue**
 - RAL/MVC intensification alone decreased the HIV-1 reservoir by over 0.5 log DNA copies/10⁶ PBMCs in only one patient
- There was **no significant effect** of RAL/MVC intensification with or without HIV-rAd5 vaccination **on CD4 or CD8 cell counts**
- DNA prime with HIV-rAd5 boost vaccination **was safe and induced significant T-cell responses against Gag, Pol, and Env** in HIV-infected patients on long-term suppressive ART
 - This vaccine should be studied further in combination with HIV latency reversal interventions as a novel eradication strategy

The EraMune 02 Study Group

Northwestern University: Rob Murphy, Chad Achenbach, Baiba Berzins, Nina Lambert, Byron Yip, Meredith Rathert. Cornell: Timothy Wilkin, Todd Stroberg University of California - San Francisco: Steven Deeks, Rebecca Hoh, Marian Kerbleski. ORVACS: Christine Katlama, Brigitte Autran, Francois Lecardonnel. Virology: Vincent Calvez, Sidonie Lambert-Niclot. Immunology: Richard Koup, Joseph Casazza, Bob Bailor. Methodology & Statistics: Dominique Costagliola, Lambert Assoumou. Support provided by: ORVACS, NIAID/VRC, Pfizer, Merck