

*Anti-nephrin and other podocyte autoantibodies:
toward an immunological stratification
of idiopathic nephrotic syndrome*

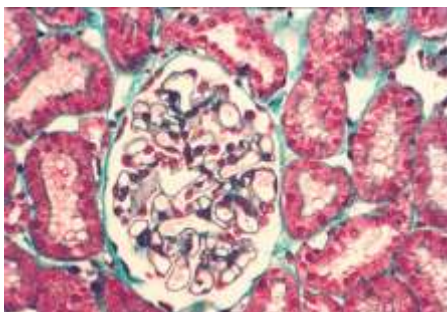
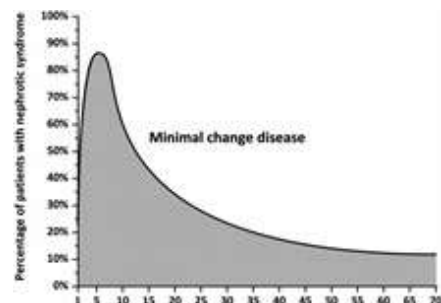
**Actualités Néphrologiques Jean Hamburger
19-20 mai 2025**

Hamza SAKHI

Department of Nephrology and Transplantation
Henri Mondor University Hospitals

idiopathic Nephrotic Syndrome

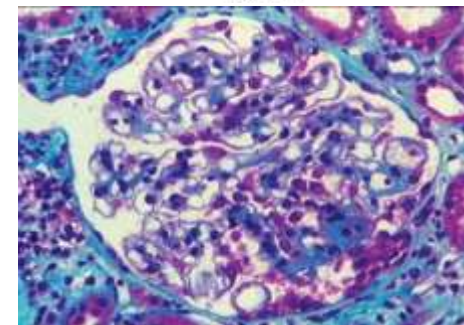
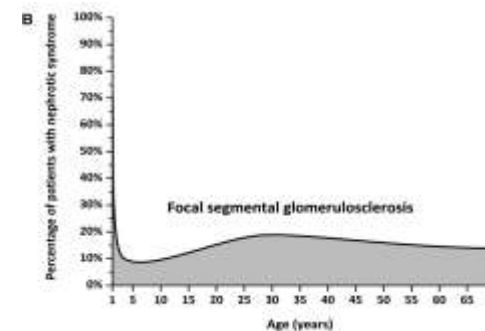
Minimal Change Disease



Negative IF

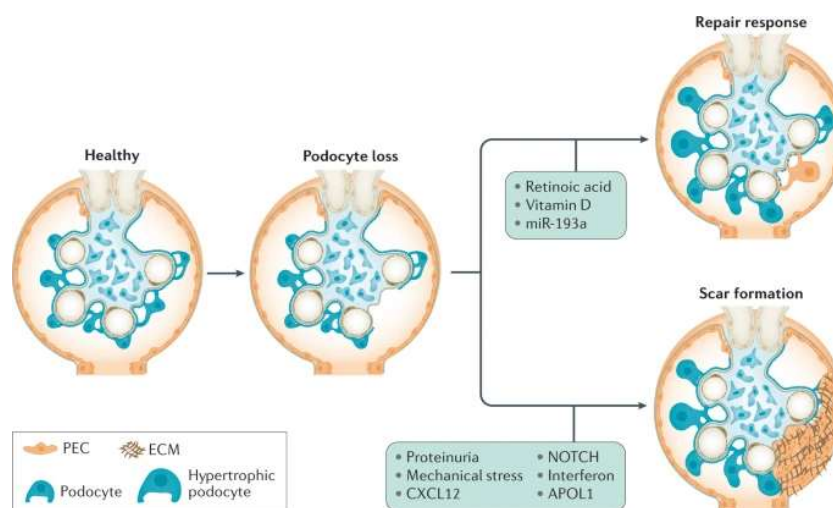
10–15% of adult NS
75% children

Primary Focal Segmental Glomerulosclerosis



IF deposits in sclerotic lesions

30% of adult NS
20% children

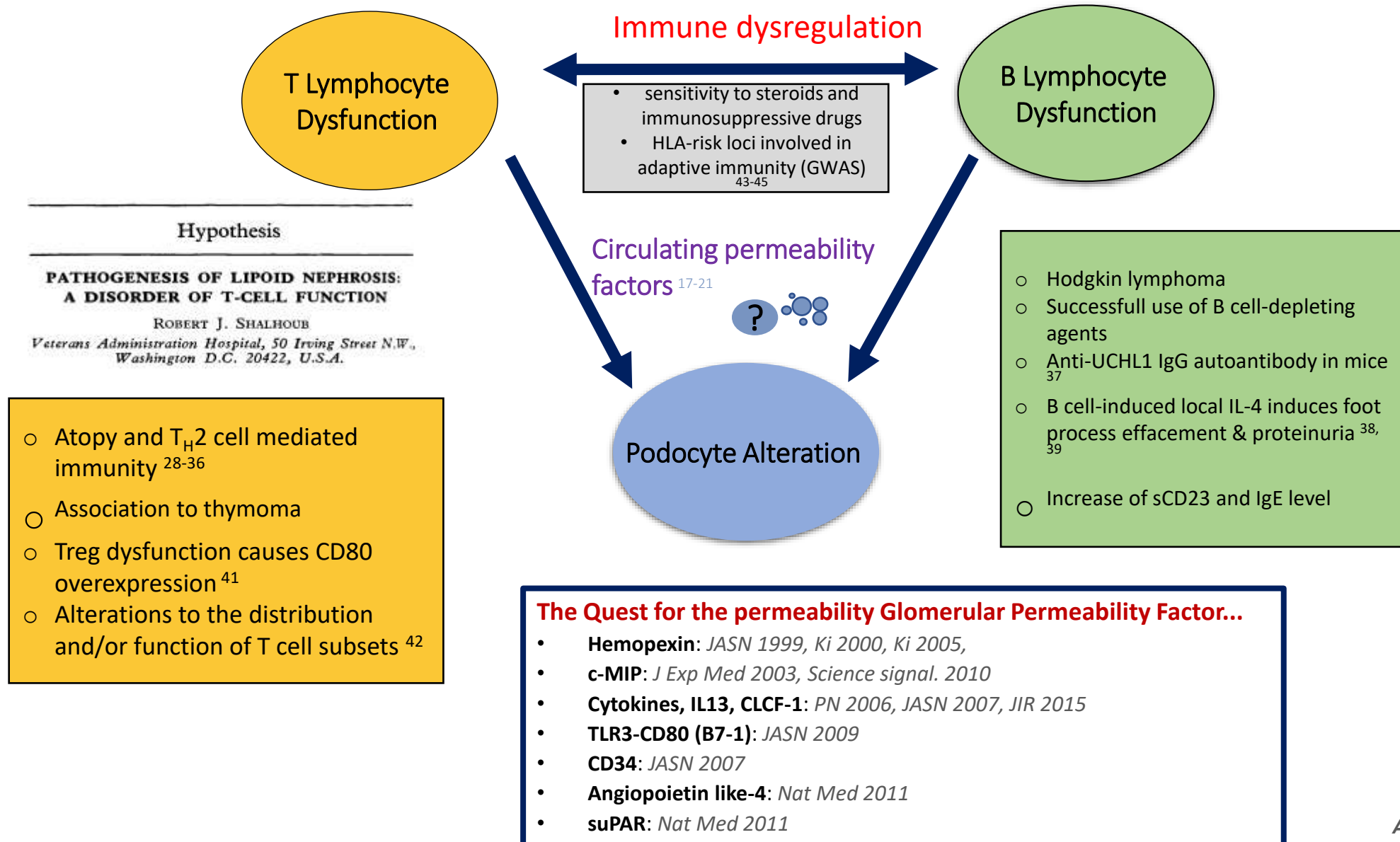


Podocyte injury
Podocytopathies

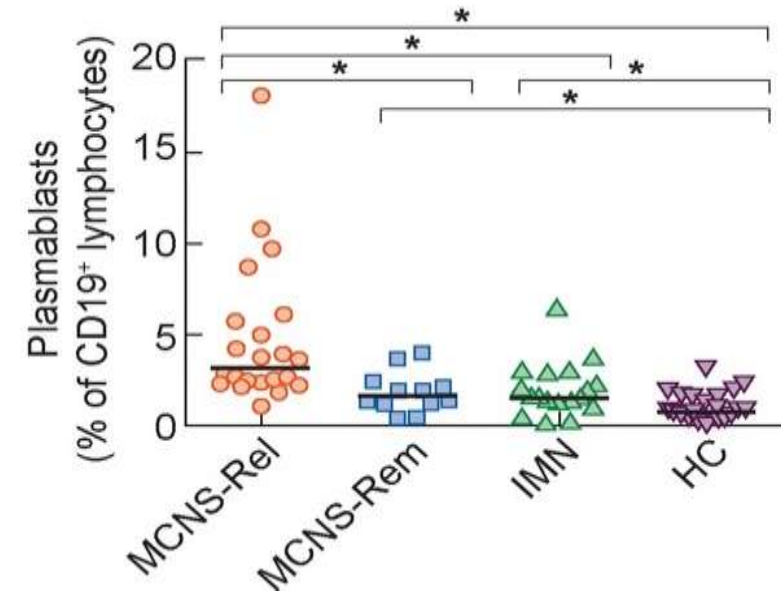
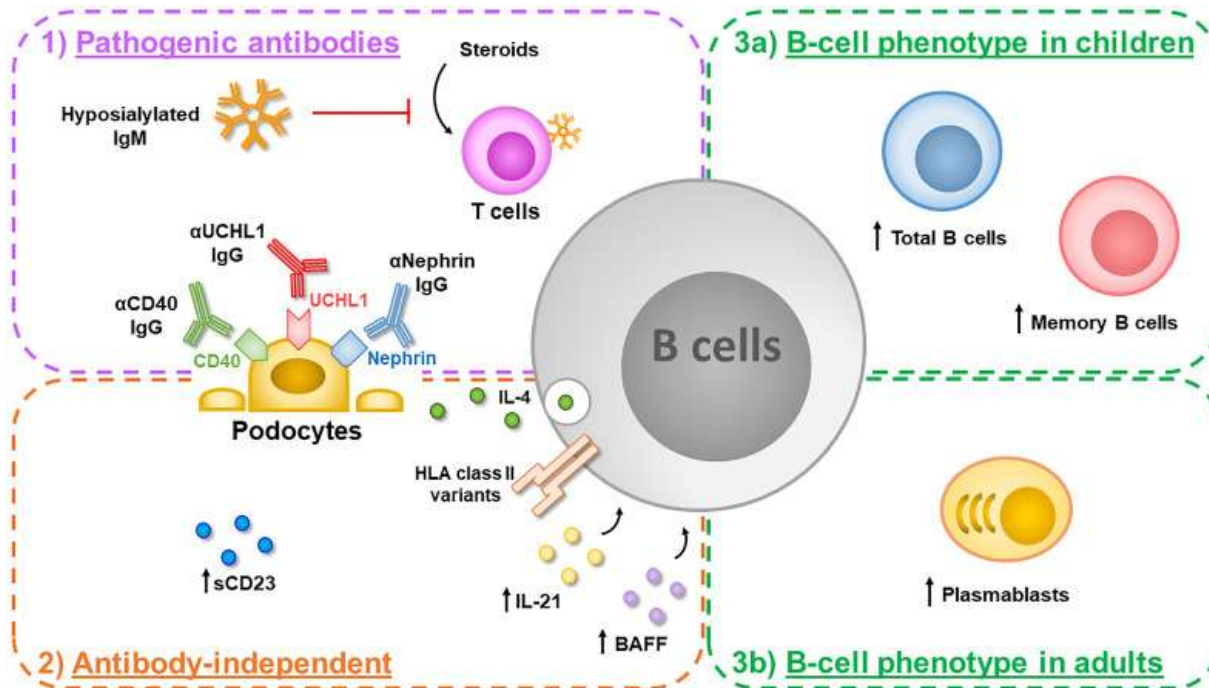
Idiopathic Nephrotic Syndrome

An immunological related disorder

Pathophysiology of immunological nephrotic syndrome : From T-cell mediated glomerular disease....



... Toward B-cell Immunity



Several studies:

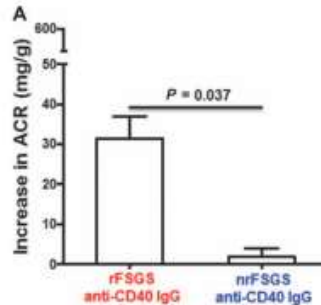
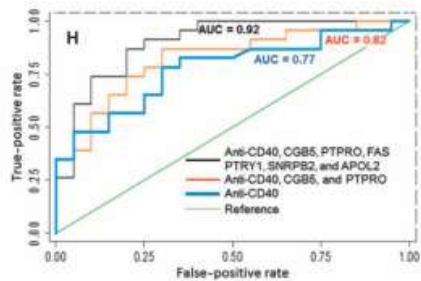
- Elevation of plasmablasts
- Extrafollicular response involvement

Idiopathic Nephrotic Syndrome: Auto-immune glomerular disease ?

Several autoantibodies have been identified, based on recurrent FSGS after kidney transplantation and idiopathic NS

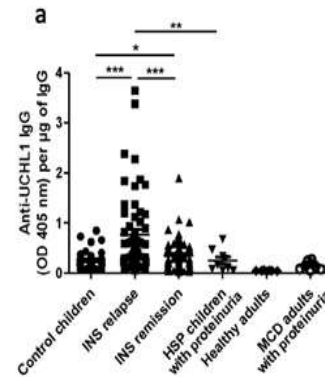
rFSGS

Anti CD40 Ab

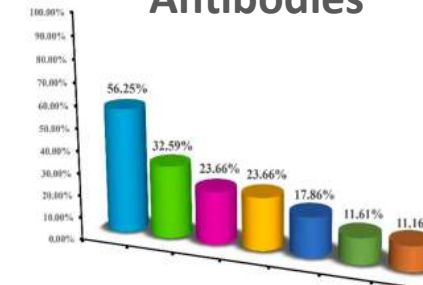


iNS

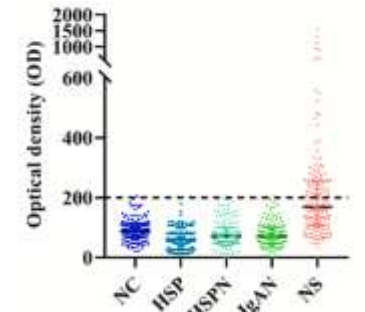
Anti UCHL1 Ab



Mass spectrometry :66% with auto-Antibodies



Vinculin auto-Ab



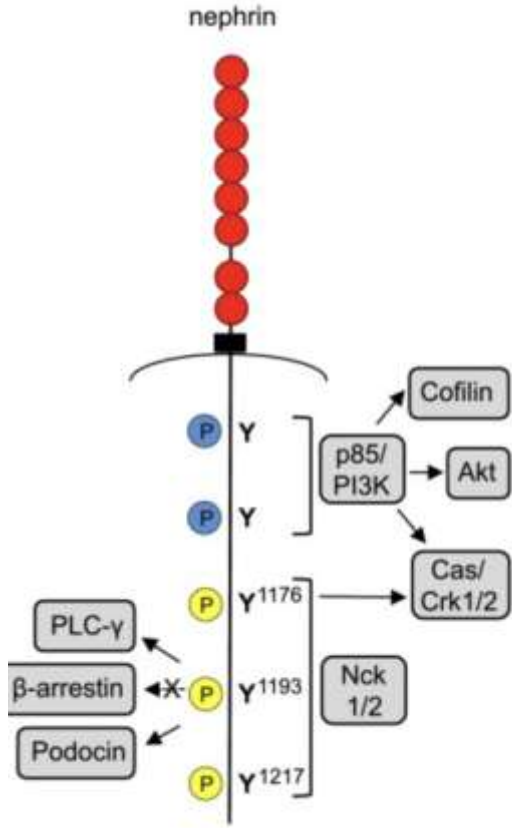
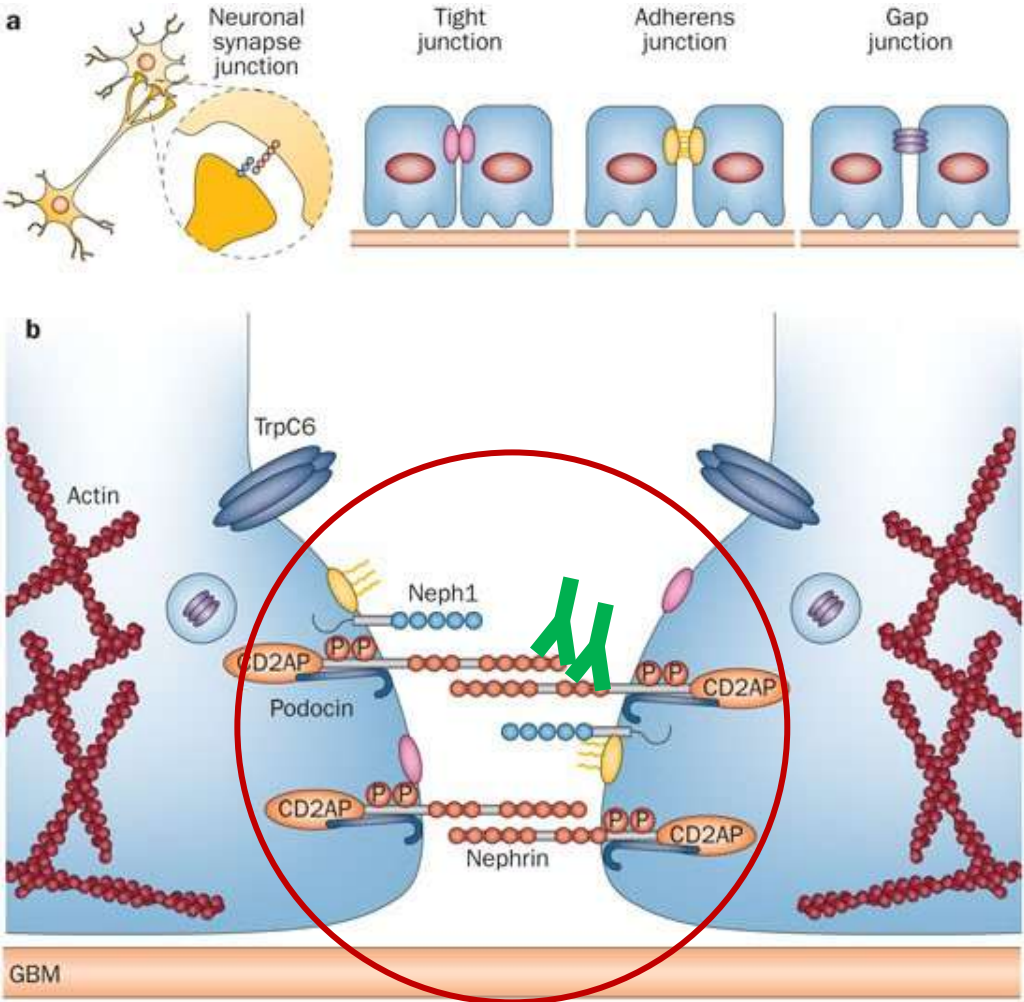
Define a sub-group of iNS :
Autoimmune podocytopathies

Qing et al. JASN 2022

Delville et al. ScienceTrans Med 2014
Jamin et al. J of Autoimmunity 2018
Qing et al. Clin. Immunology 2021

- **Key role of the humoral immune response ++**
- **Existence of a glomerular permeability factor**
- **Targets: podocytes and slit diaphragm**

Discovery of Anti-Nephrin Antibodies



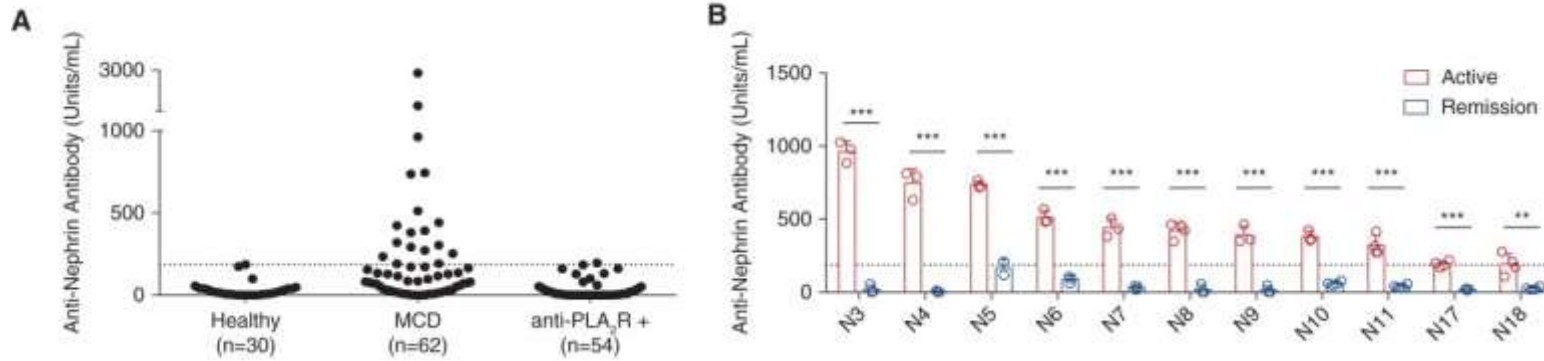
Discovery of Anti-Nephrin Antibodies

Study	Detection method of circulating anti-nephrin autoantibodies
Watts et al., JASN 2022 [1]	Immunoprecipitation and signal-enhanced ELISA with lab-produced recombinant human nephrin ectodomain, 6xHIS-tagged, expressed in HEK293

Hengel et al. CKJ 2025

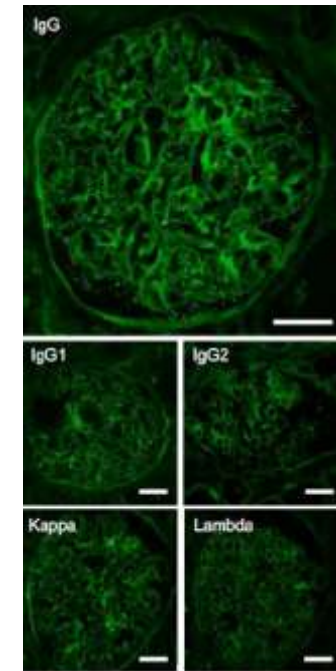
Neptune cohort: 41 children and 21 adults with MCD

- **18/62 (29%) anti-nephrin Ab**
- **1/54 MN**
- **12/18 seropositive patients → Remission**



Disappearance of antibodies with treatment

positive IF on MCD kidney biopsy



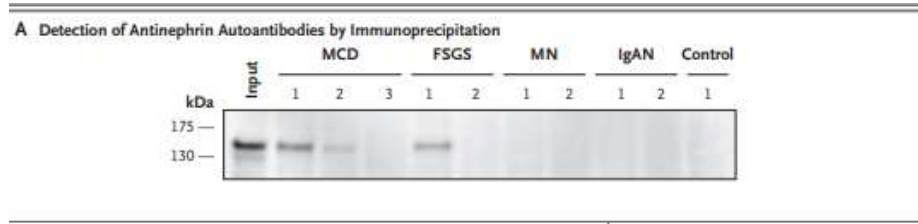
Discovery of Anti-Nephrin Antibodies

Hengel et al., NEJM 2024 [2]

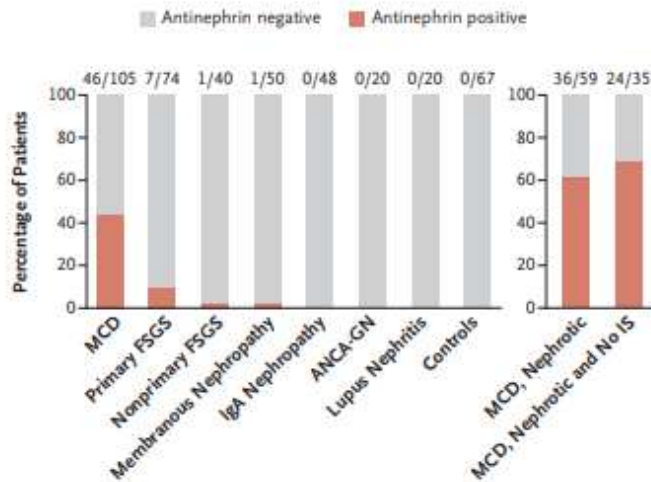
Immunoprecipitation with lab-produced recombinant human nephrin ectodomain, 8xHIS- and twinstrep-tagged, or hybrid assay of immunoprecipitation followed by ELISA of eluted recombinant nephrin, expressed in HEK293

- 182 children with INS (NEPHROVIR cohort, cohorts from Bari and Rome)
- 357 adults with biopsy-proven glomerular diseases (MCD, pFSGS, MN, IgAN, ANCA, SLE from Hamburg GN Registry and Bari cohort)
- 117 healthy controls (50 children, 67 adults)

Hengel et al. CKJ 2025



B Antinephrin Autoantibody Prevalence among Adults



C Antinephrin Autoantibody Prevalence among Children

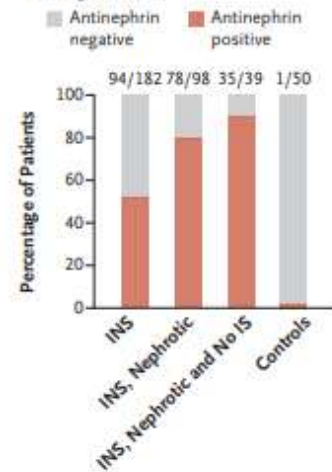
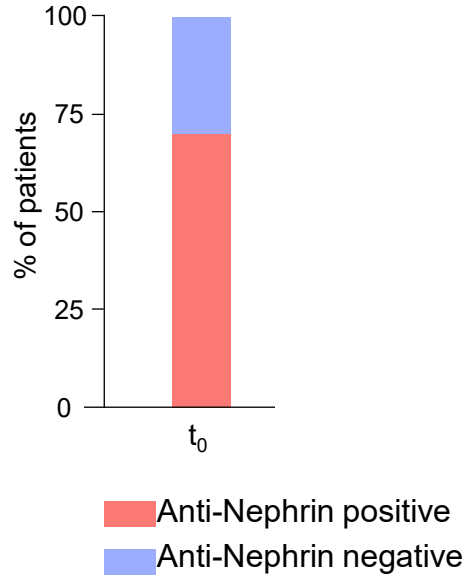


Table 1. Prevalence of Antinephrin Autoantibodies in Patients with Glomerular Diseases and Controls

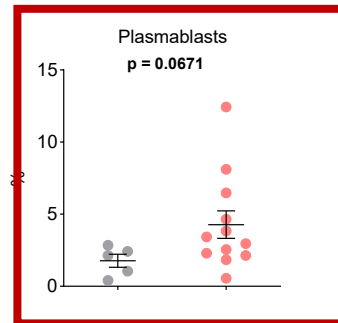
Patient Classification	Antinephrin Autoantibody-Positive Ratio (%)
Idiopathic nephrotic syndrome	94/182 (52%)
Idiopathic nephrotic syndrome, nephrotic, ^a no IS ^b	35-39 (90%)
Minimal change disease	46/105 (44%)
Minimal change disease, nephrotic, ^a no IS ^b	24/35 (69%)
Primary FSGS	7/74 (9%)
Nonprimary FSGS	1/40 (2%)
Membranous nephropathy	1/50 (2%)
IgA nephropathy	0/48 (0%)
ANCA vasculitis	0/20 (0%)
Lupus nephritis	0/20 (0%)
Healthy adults	0/67 (0%)
Healthy children	1/50 (2%)

Fischman et al. AJKD 2025

Discovery of Anti-Nephrin Antibodies



12/17 (71%) anti-nephrin positive
In de novo MCD



Plasmablasts

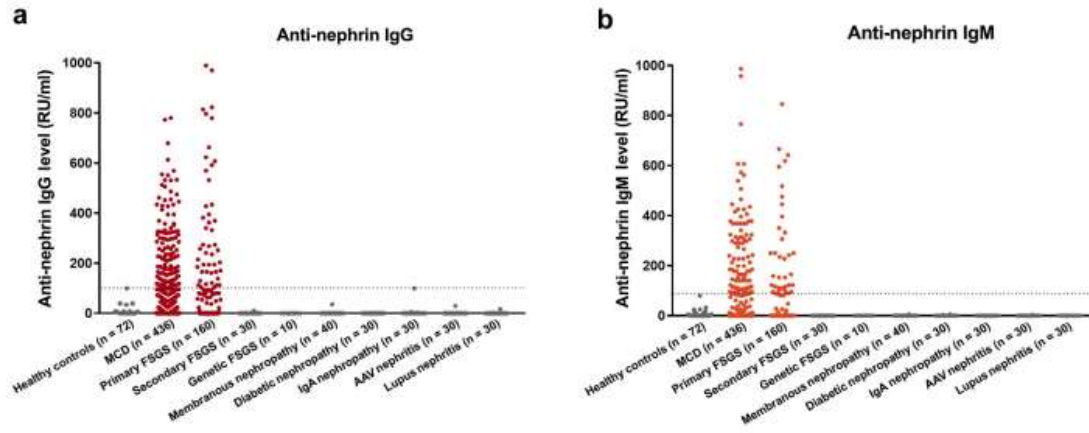
Anti nephrin Ab (+) : 4,3 % \pm 3,3 (p=0,07)

Anti nephrin Ab (-) : 1,77 % \pm 1

At Diagnosis

	Total (N=17)	Anti-Nephrin (-) (N=5)	Anti-Nephrin (+) (N=12)	p-value
Age (years), Median (IQR)	35.0 (25.0-47.0)	43.0 (25.0-52.0)	34.5 (26.0-43.3)	0.8
Sex, Male, n (%)	9 (53)	2 (40)	7 (58)	0.6
UPCR (mg/mmol), Median (IQR)	705.4 (461.6-864.1)	620.0 (512.5-697.69)	788.6 (466.64-878.8)	0.3
Albumin level (g/L), Median (IQR)	17.0 (11.0-20.0)	20.0 (20.0-23.0)	13.5 (10.0-17.0)	0.06
Creatinine level (μ mol/l), Median (IQR)	86.0 (69.0-99.0)	85.0 (69.0-91.0)	88.0 (71.3-103)	0.6
eGFR at diagnosis (ml/min/1.73m ²), Median (IQR)	89.0 (79.0-106)	101 (89.0-106)	85.5 (77.8-115)	0.8

Discovery of Anti-Nephrin Antibodies

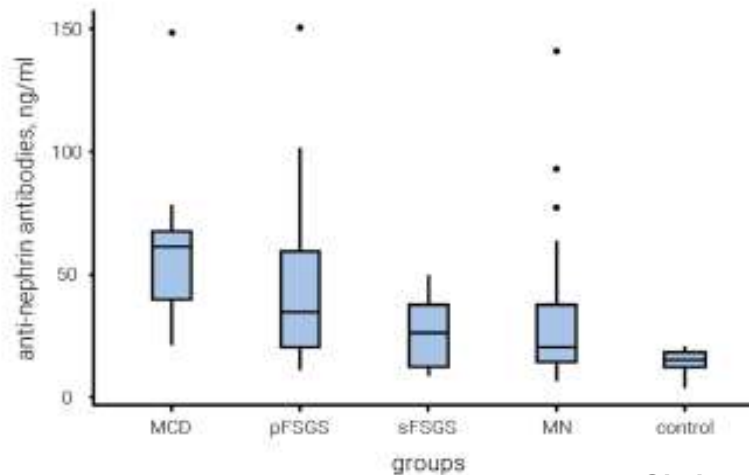


Shu et al. KI 2025

Anti-nephrin Ab : 43 %

- IgG : 30% and IgM : 26%
- 13,1 % both IgG & IgM

- **IgM : younger, more women, more nephrotic**
- **IgG & IgM : Similar prognosis in terms of response and relapse**
- But having both IgG/IgM → More severe forms**



Chebotareva et al. Nephrology 2024

77 with glomerulopathies and 11 healthy subject

ELISA test

Anti nephrin level

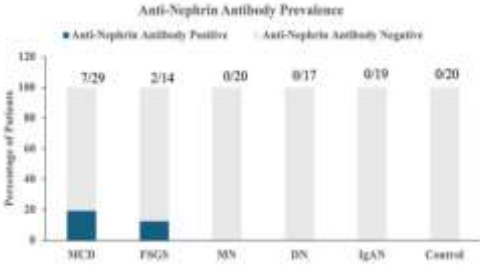
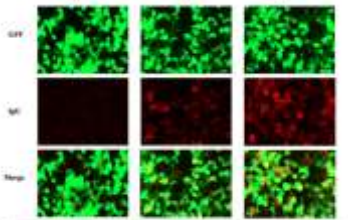
- MCD : 61,2 [28,9-66,3] ng/mL
- FSGS : 32,5 [17,2-58,4] ng/mL. (primary: 45,2[20-64,3] ng/mL)
- MN : 20,3 [14,4-38,4] ng/mL
- HC : 15,3 [12-18,9] ng/mL,

Anti-nephrin antibodies detected by other groups, but with heterogeneous assays

Can They Be Used as a Diagnostic Tool for INS?

Anti-Nephrin Antibodies : Diagnosis tool

Indirect IF



Chen et al .CKJ 2025

Anti-nephrin Ab in iNS diagnosis

Specificity 98%

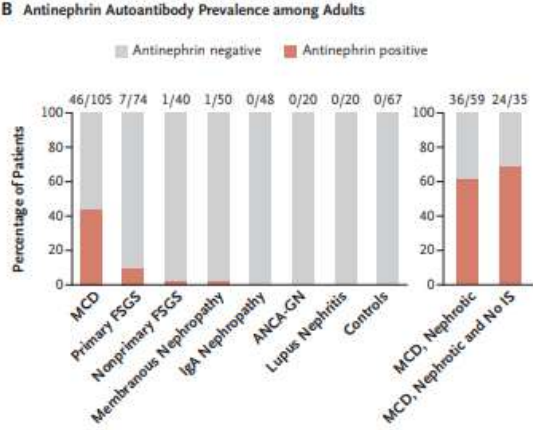
Variable Sensitivity

Type of Test

Histological sub-type

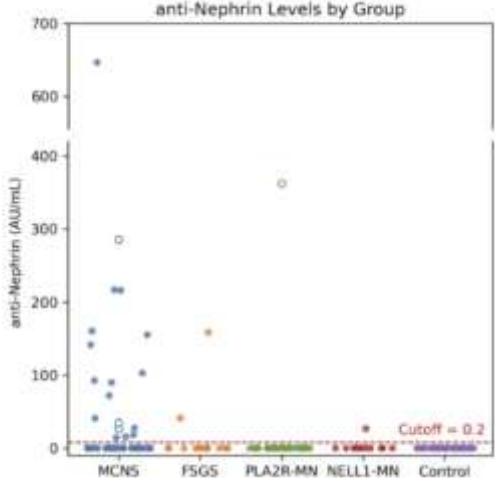
Disease-course dependent detection

Western Blot



Hengel et al. NEJM 2024

ELISA



Hayashi et al. Scientific report 2026

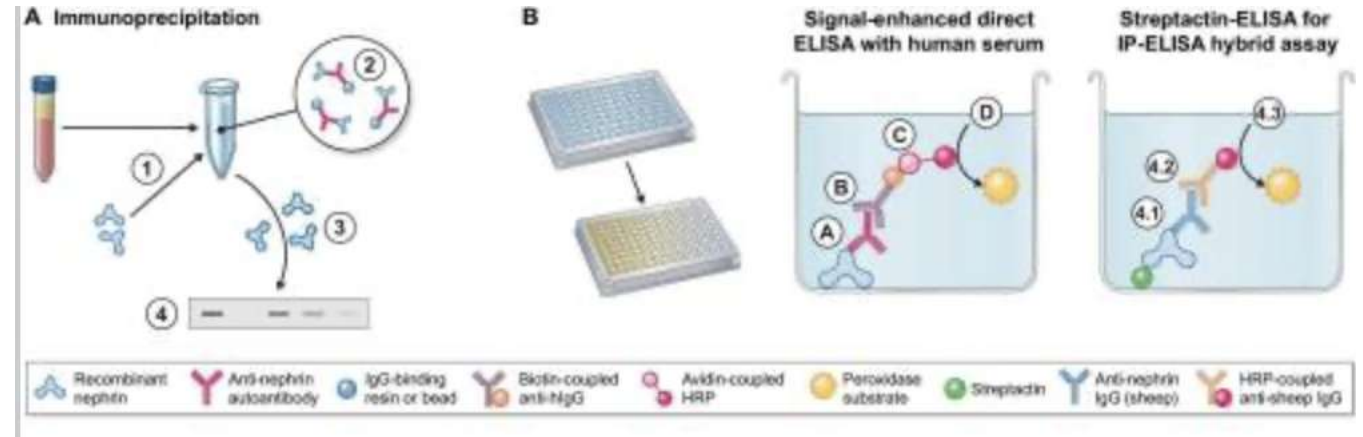
A broad variety of technics

Limitations:

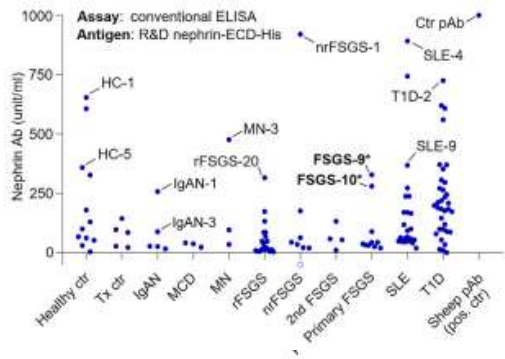
- Low antibody titer
- Complex Ac-Ag complex rapidly internalized

2 cohorts and plasma

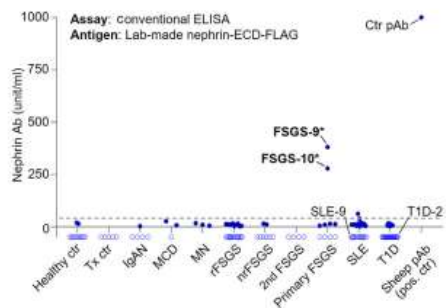
127 patients and validation 21 × 2 FSGS/MCD



ELISA



Mouse cell produced nephrin
False positive ++



HEK cell produced nephrin

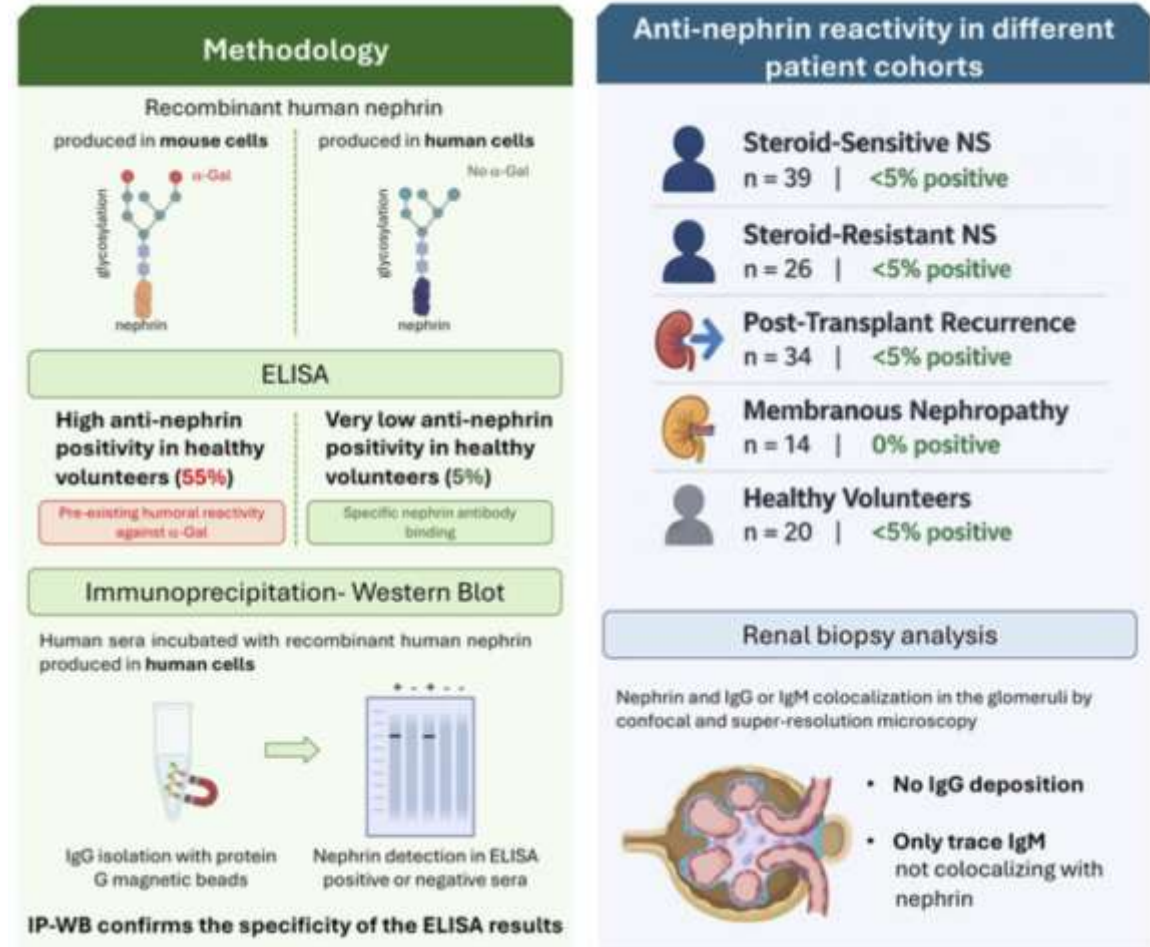
Method	Specificity	Sensitivity	Clinical feasibility
Conventional ELISA	Low à moderate	Variable	High
Immunoprecipitation – Western blot (IP-WB)	Excellent	High	Low
On-beads ELISA (IP-based)	Good	Moderate	Moderate to high
Immunofluorescence (cellular or tissue-based)	Very low	Very low	Low

A broad variety of technics

And sometimes non-reproducible results..

- False positives already observed with murine recombinant nephrin
- Sensitivity issues

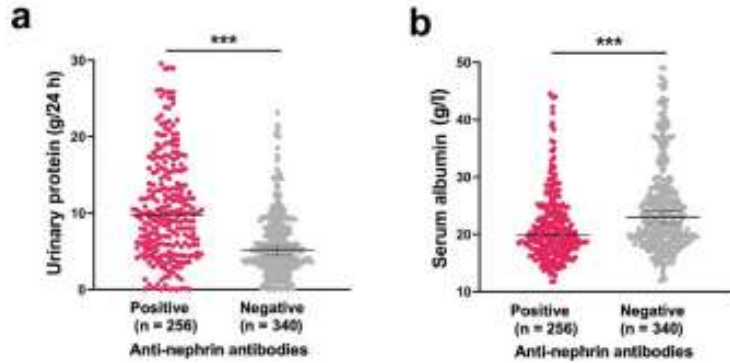
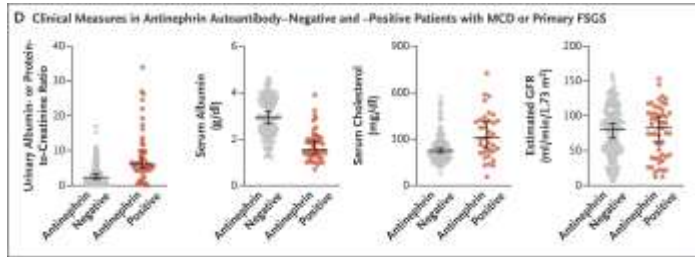
To date: no validated French assay available



**Can They Be Used for INS Stratification?
Impact on therapeutic management**

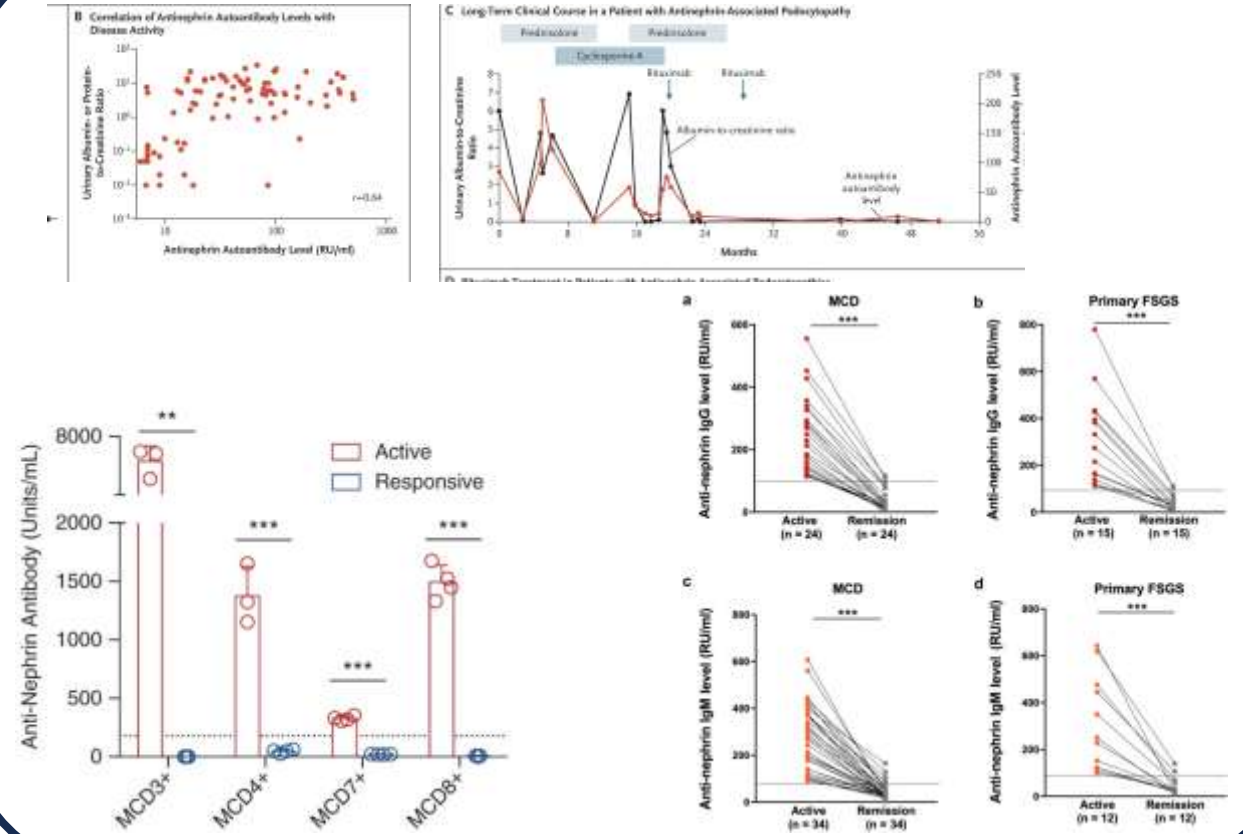
Anti-nephrin Ab and Clinical Presentation

Comparison antinephrin (+) vs antinephrin (-)



Deeper nephrotic syndrome

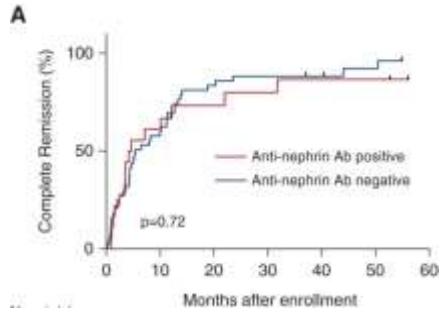
Correlation anti-nephrin Ab and activity



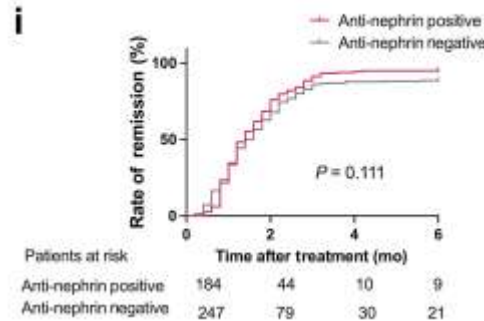
Patients Anti-nephrins (+) → Deeper nephrotic syndrome
Correlation of antibodies with clinical activity

Anti-nephrin Ab : Prognosis

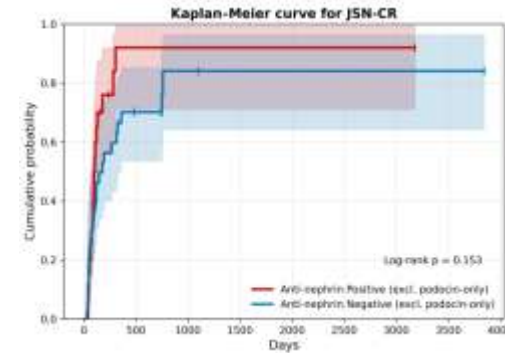
Compareason antinephrin (+) vs antinephrine (-)



Watts et al. JASN 2022

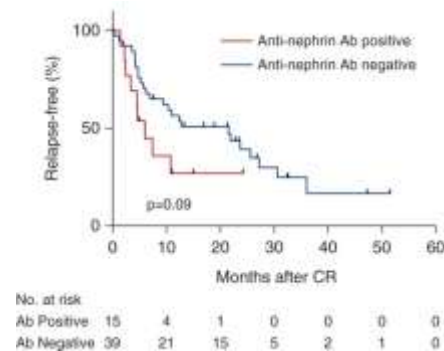


Shu et al. KI 2024

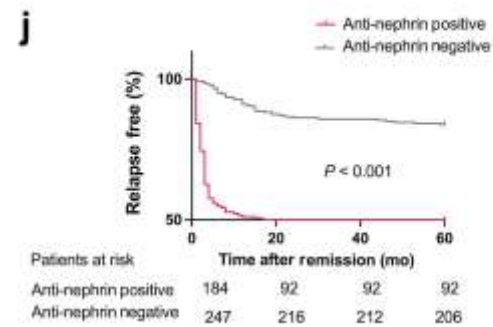


Hayashi Scientific report 2026

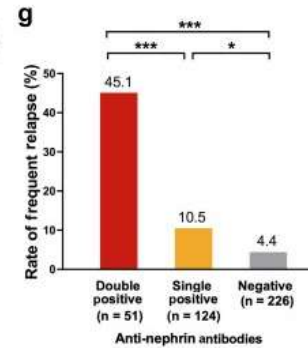
No difference in remission probability



Watts et al. JASN 2022



Shu et al. KI 2024



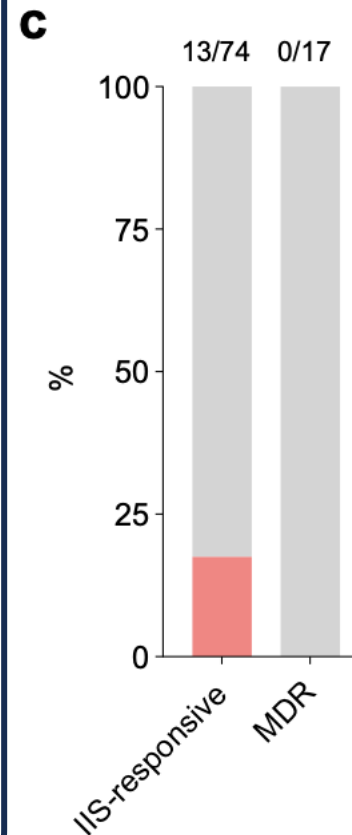
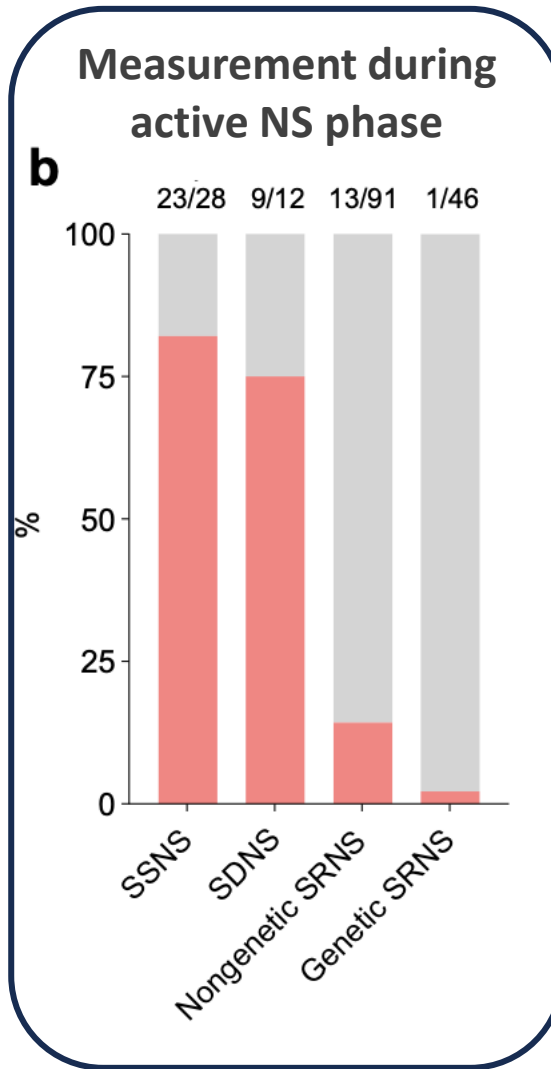
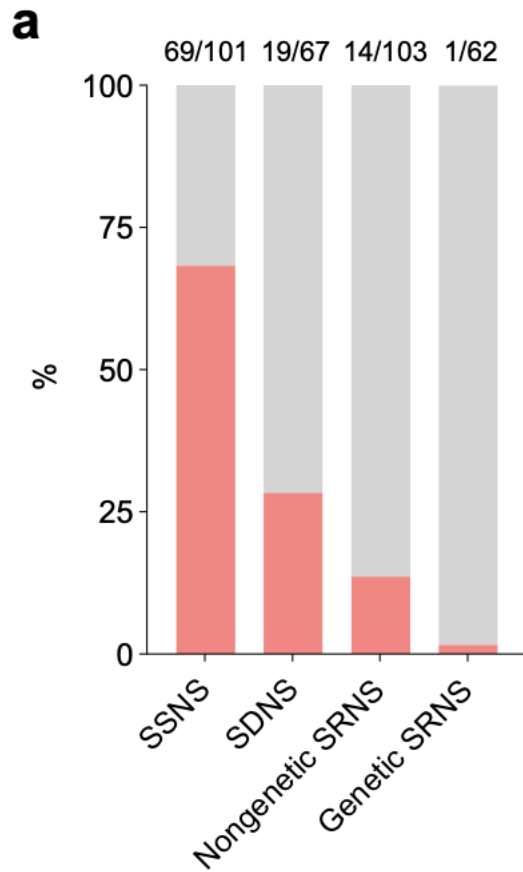
Steroid-Dependant

	Model A adjusted OR (95%CI)	p value	Model B adjusted OR (95%CI)	p value
Age (years)	1.05 (1.00-1.11)	0.052	1.05 (1.00-1.11)	0.054
Gender (Male)	0.23 (0.04-1.23)	0.087	0.16 (0.03-0.97)	0.046*
Serum creatinine (mg/dL)	0.62 (0.19-2.06)	0.439	0.67 (0.20-2.26)	0.520
Serum albumin (g/dL)	0.26 (0.05-1.36)	0.110	0.21 (0.04-1.13)	0.068
Urinary protein (uPCR, g/gCr)	0.90 (0.77-1.05)	0.164	0.86 (0.72-1.02)	0.090
Any antibody positive	9.88 (1.38-70.78)	0.023*	-	-
Anti-nephrin antibody positive	-	-	9.31 (1.22-70.98)	0.031*

Hayashi Scientific report 2026

Shorter relapse-free period

Interest in Steroid-Resistant Patients

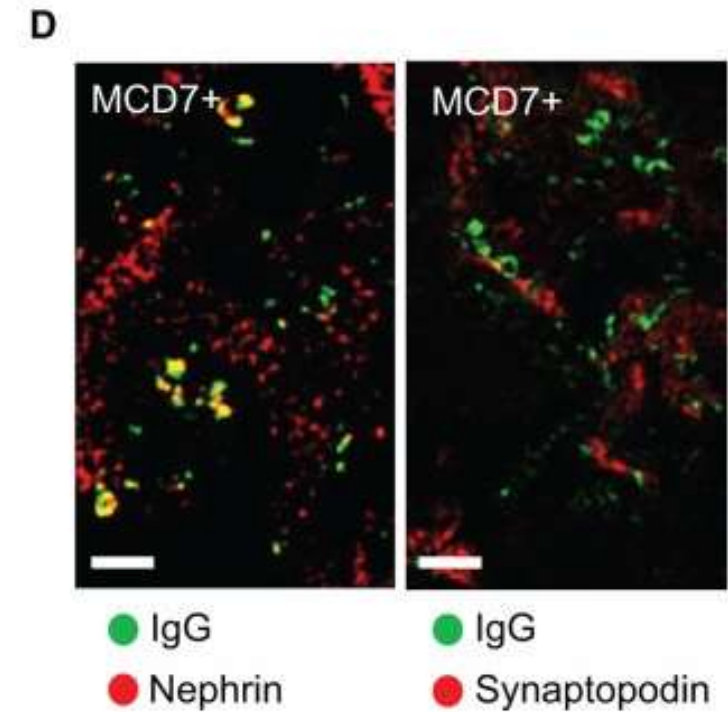
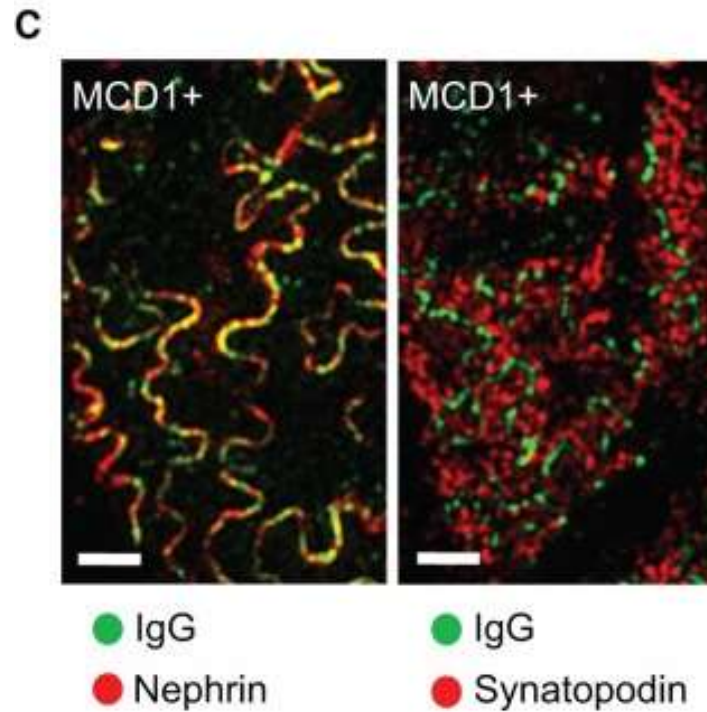
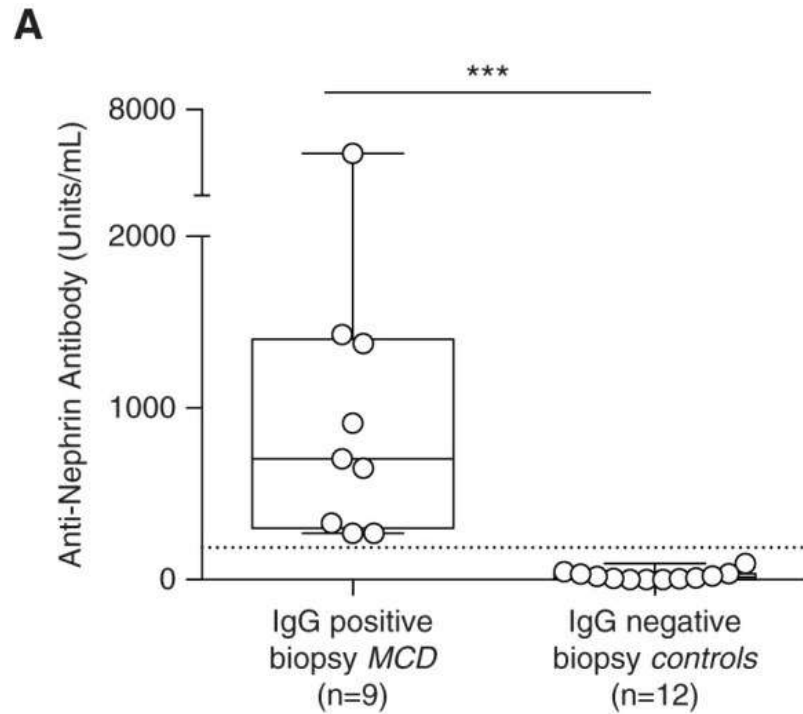


- Ab Prevalence**
- 70% of steroid-sensitive NS
 - Genetic form negative
 - 20% of Non genetic steroid-resistant forms
 - 20% of IS-responders
 - 0% of multi-drug resistant

➔ Therapeutic decision-making tool
May facilitate therapeutic escalation decisions in steroid-resistant patients

What About Histology?

New paradigm on histological pattern in idiopathic nephrotic syndrome ?



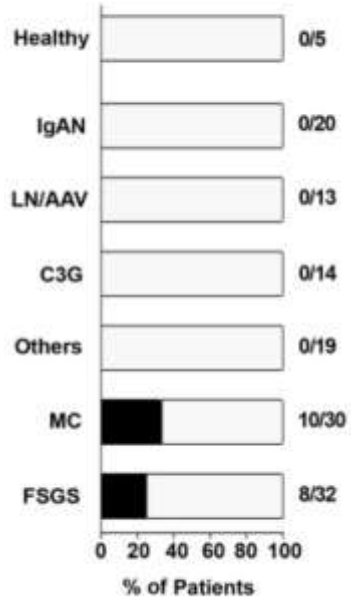
**Anti-nephrin Ab (+) all have IgG deposits
IgG and nephrin colocalization**

But some NS cases are IgG deposit (+) but without colocalization and antinephrin Ab (-)

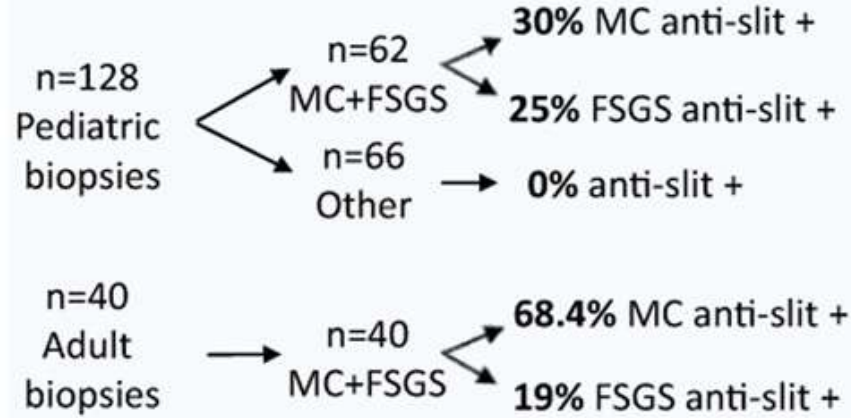
Idiopathic nephrotic syndrome anti-slit antibody (+)

% patients with IgG along the slit.

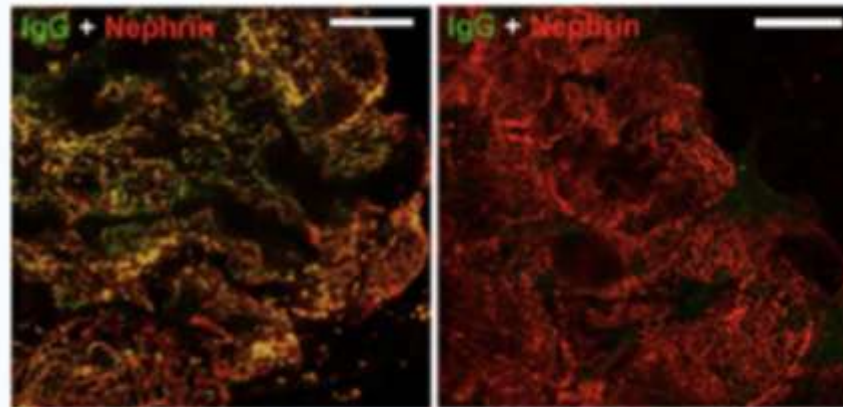
■ Anti-slit antibodies positive
□ Anti-slit antibodies negative



High Resolution microscopy



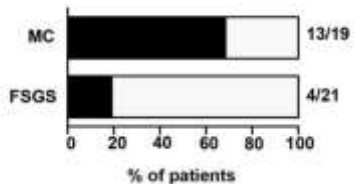
**New sub-group
Patients anti-slit Ab (+)**



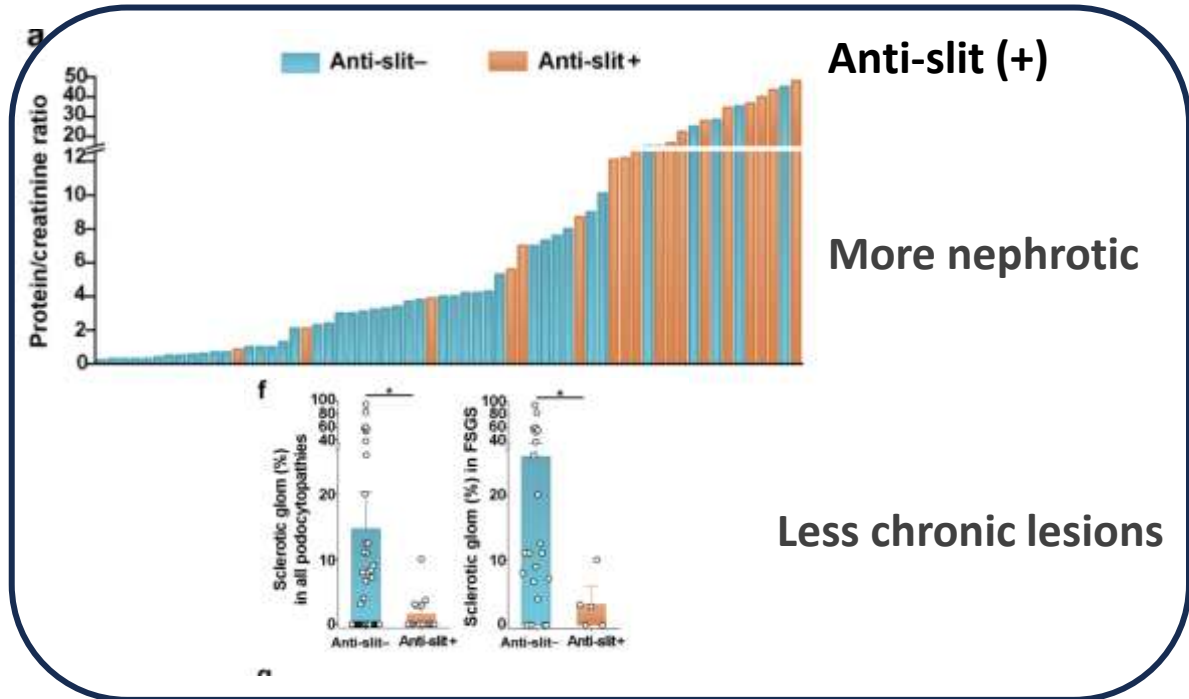
Anti-slit+

Anti-slit-

■ Anti-slit antibodies pos
□ Anti-slit antibodies neg



Idiopathic Nephrotic syndrome anti-slit antibody (+) Characteristics

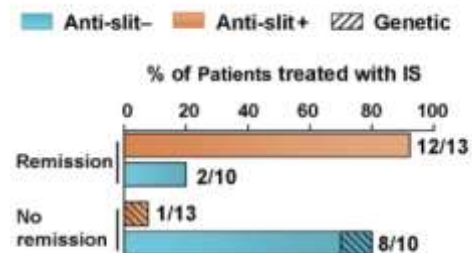


Anti-slit (+)

- More nephrotic
- Not associated with genetic forms
- Response to 2nd line of IS therapy

Spectrum of auto-immune nephrotic syndrome

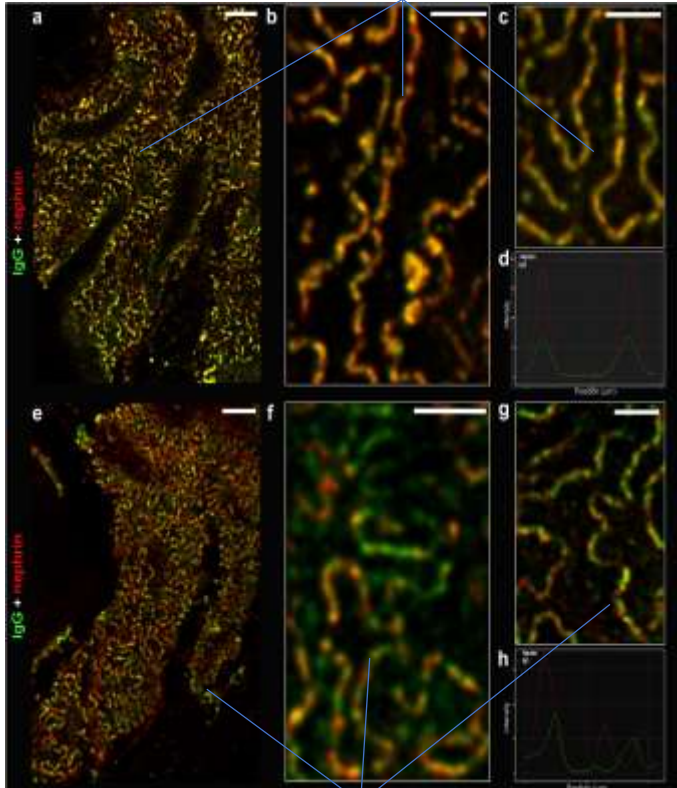
Steroid Resistant Nephrotic Syndrome



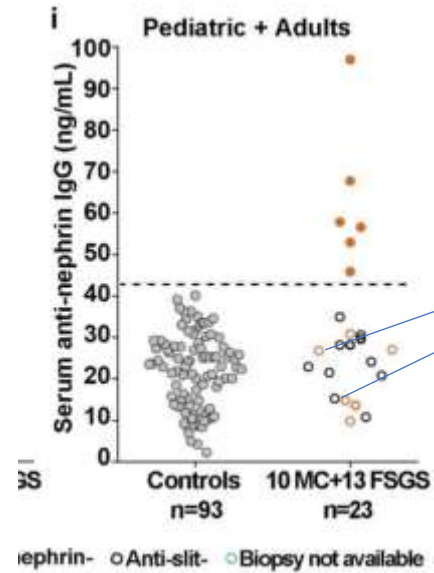
2nd line IS therapy
Anti slit (+) = 90%
remission

Idiopathic nephrotic syndrome anti-slit antibody (+)

Colocalisation
IgG/nephrin



No Colocalisation
IgG/nephrin



Patient anti-slit(+)

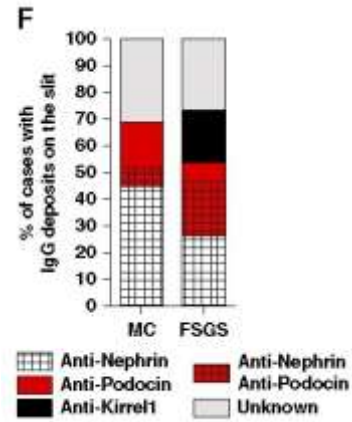
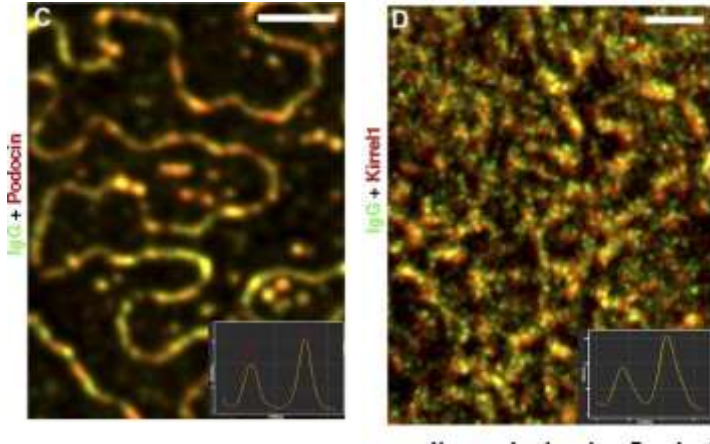
- No colocalization with nephrin
- ELISA : Anti-nephrin (-)

STED microscopy + ELISA

Pediatric patients	➤ 78% anti-slit + anti-nephrin +
	➤ 22% anti-slit+ anti-nephrin -
Adult patients	➤ 55% anti-slit + anti-nephrin +
	➤ 45% anti-slit+ anti-nephrin -

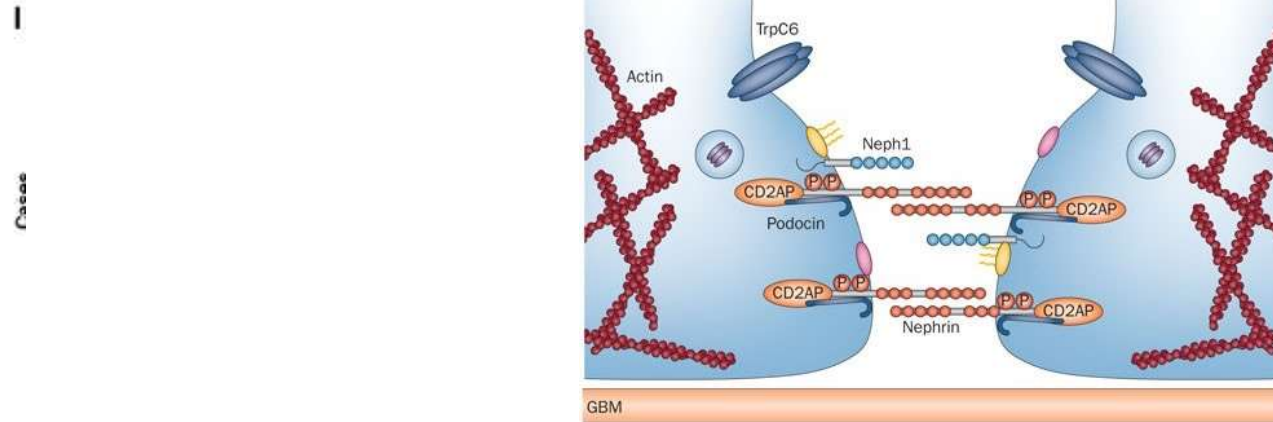
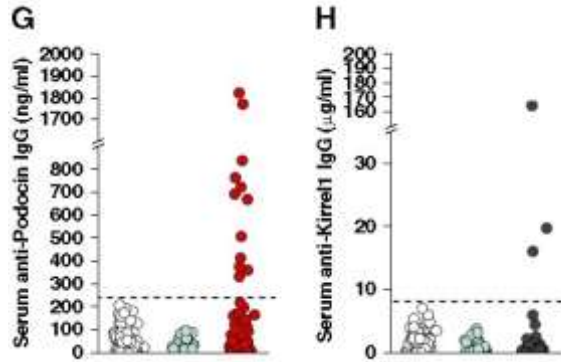
Other target ?

Idiopathic nephrotic syndrome anti-slit antibody (+)



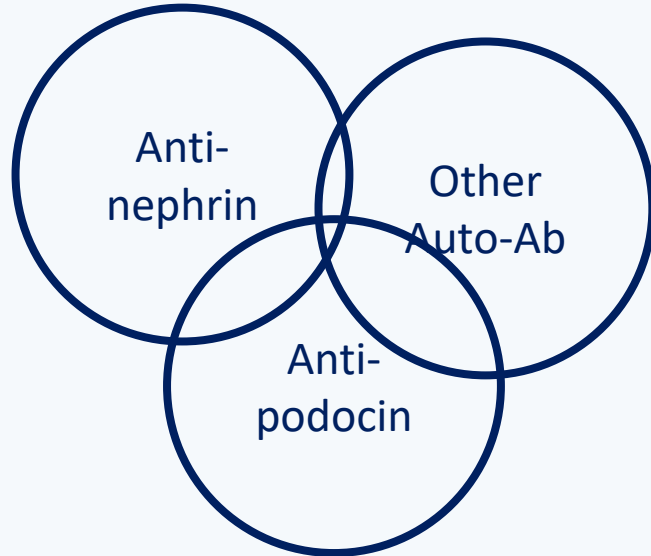
N= 116 biopsies

- Identification of anti-podocines 18%
- Identification of anti-Kirrel 1 5%



**Idiopathic Nephrotic Syndrome
(MCD/FSGS)**

Anti-slit Ab (+)



Anti-slit Ab (-)

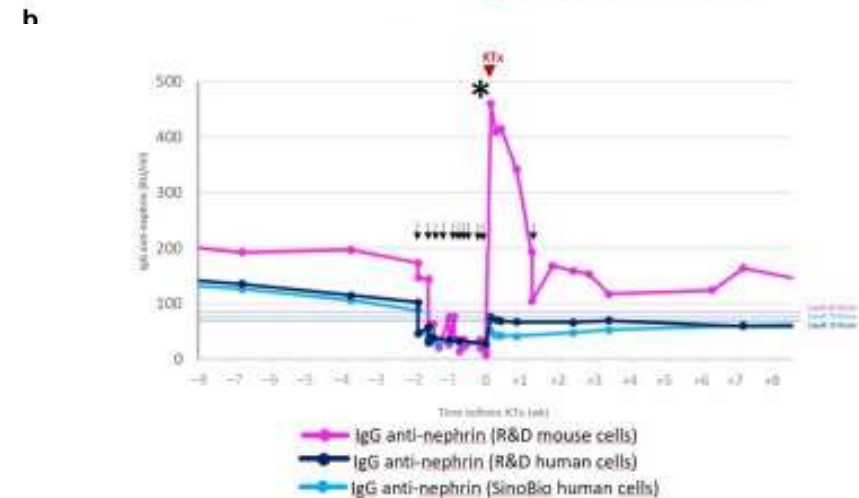
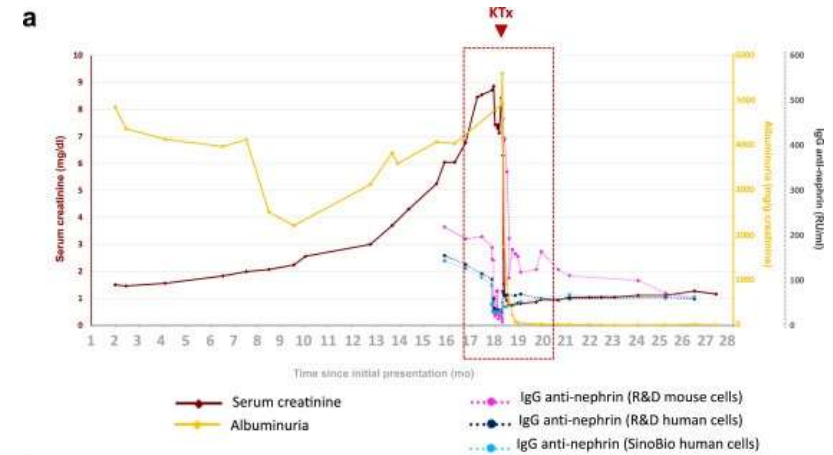
**Other immune mechanism
Non immune causes
Auto-Ab not detected**

A new biomarker of recurrent FSGS after kidney transplantation?

Anti-nephrin Ab and relapse risk in FSGS : How to manage ?

Living donor case

Case	Methods
<p>An adolescent with pFSGS and evidence of anti-nephrin antibodies detected prior to living-donor KTx</p> <p>↓</p> <p>Pretransplant reduction of anti-nephrin antibody levels by RTX and TPE.</p>	<p>Monitoring of anti-nephrin antibody levels by ELISA, Immunoprecipitation and Western Blot using different nephrin proteins.</p>
<p>More than 1 year of follow-up without recurrence of proteinuria.</p>	<p>Glomerular co-staining of nephrin and IgG by immunofluorescence.</p> <p>Characterization of cross-reactivity with the additional slit diaphragm protein NEPH3.</p>

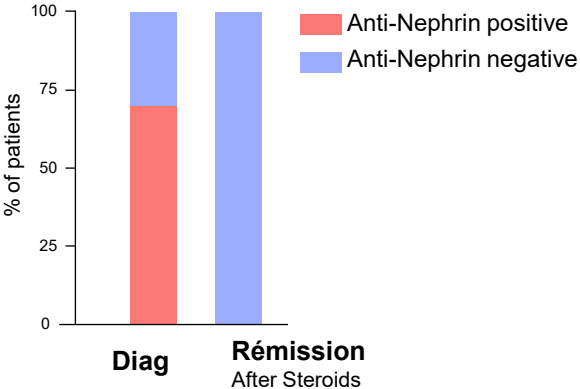


➤ What about deceased donor management ?

Pathogenicity of anti-nephrin antibodies ?

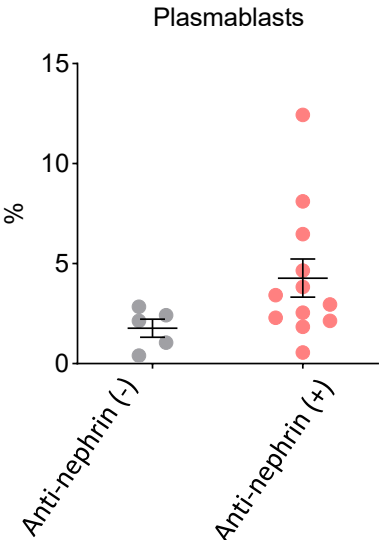
Anti-nephrin antibodies: are they pathogenic?

➤ Correlation with disease activity

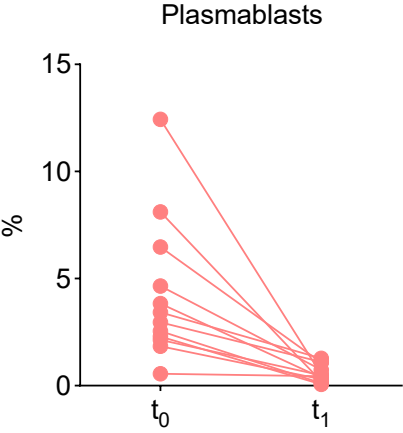
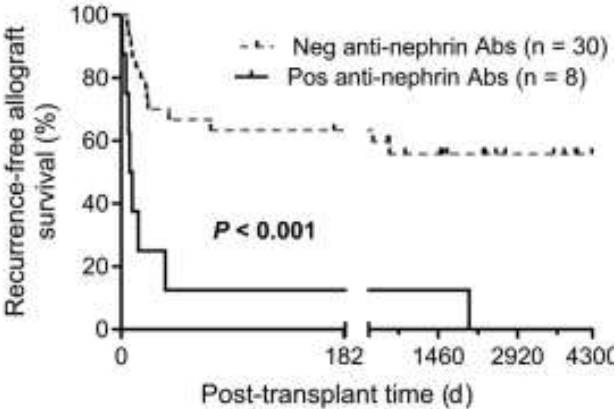


**Negativation of Anti-nephrin Ab in less than 8 weeks
After steroid therapy initiation**

➤ Correlation with B cell markers



Correlation with relapse



Anti-nephrin antibodies: are they pathogenic?

- **Correlation with disease activity**

Anti-nephrin antibodies: are they pathogenic?

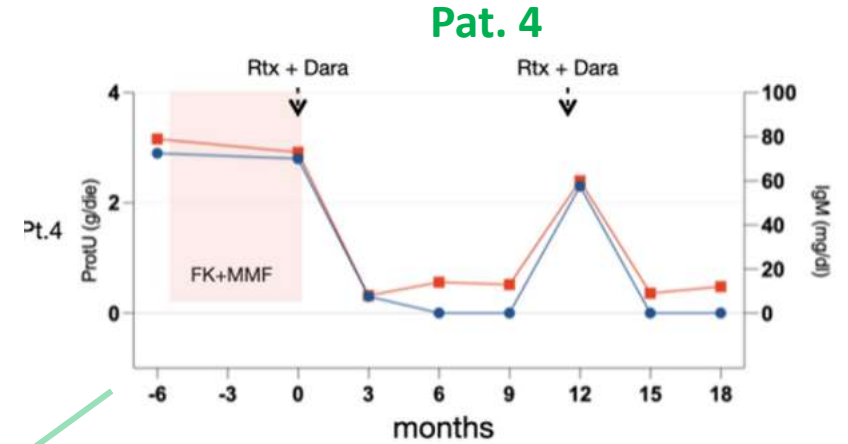
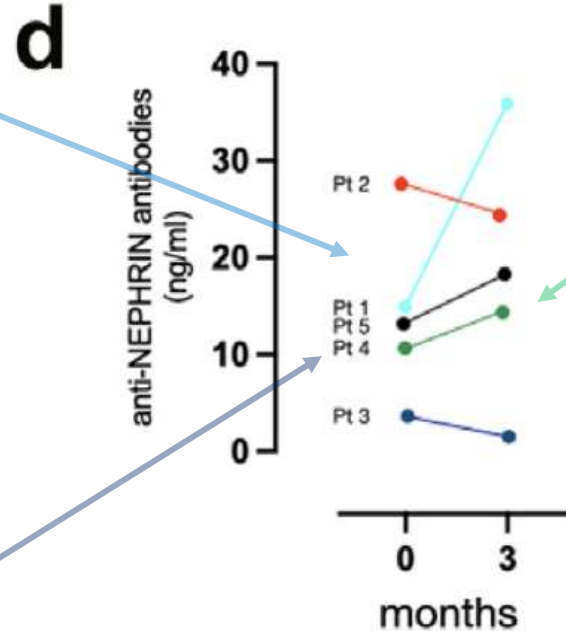
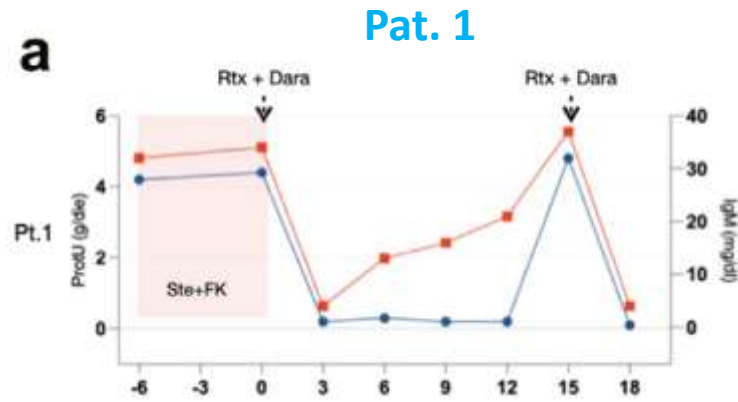
- Correlation with disease activity **Not always**

Anti-nephrin antibodies: are they pathogenic?

➤ Correlation with disease activity

Not always

MDR-Nephrotic Syndrome



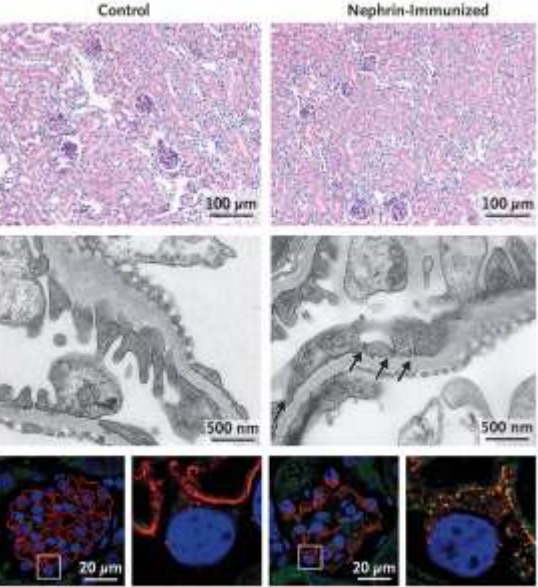
**Clinical remission in patients 1, 4 and 5 without decrease of anti-nephrins Ab
Month 0 → 3**

Anti-nephrin antibodies: proposed mechanism of action

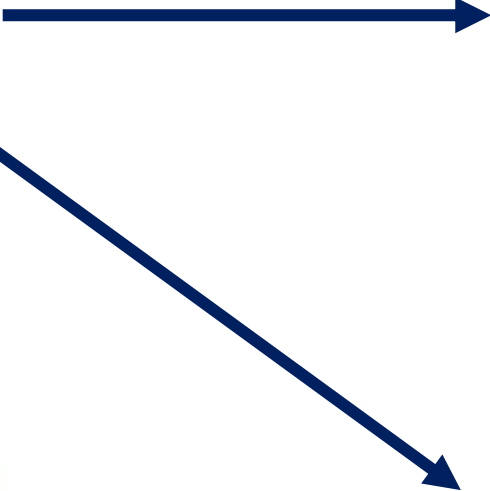
immunization with rec nephrin + Freund adjuvant



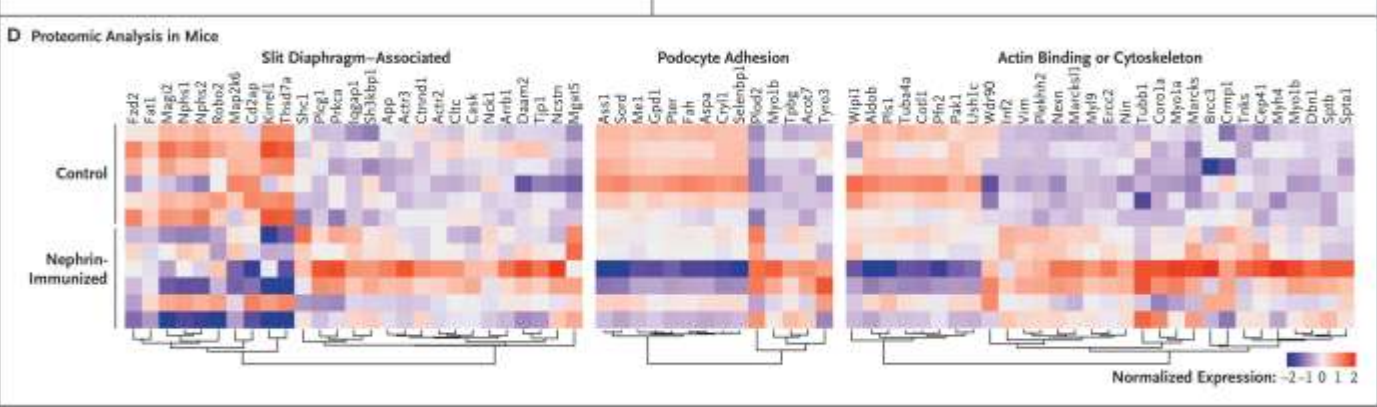
Nephrotic Syndrome
Histological pattern MCD-Like
IgG deposit



Mouse IgG, Nephrin, DNA

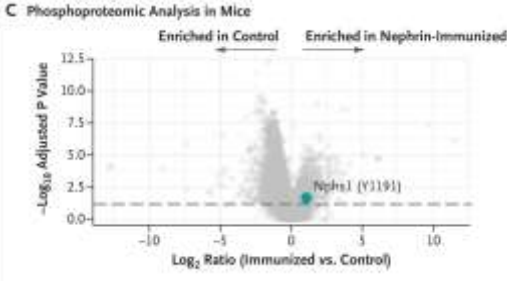


Glomerular Proteome



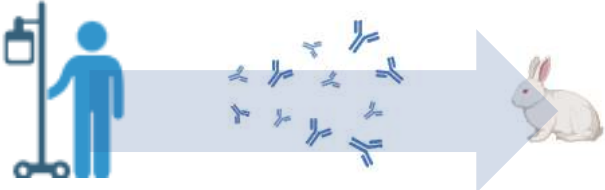
- ↑ Endocytic trafficking proteins
- ↓ Slit diaphragm proteins
- Altered podocyte adhesion proteins
- Cytoskeletal protein remodeling

Nephrin phosphorylation

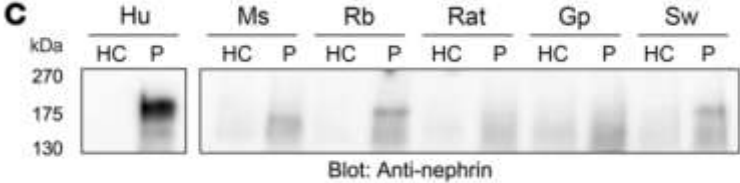


Anti-nephrin antibodies: proposed mechanism of action

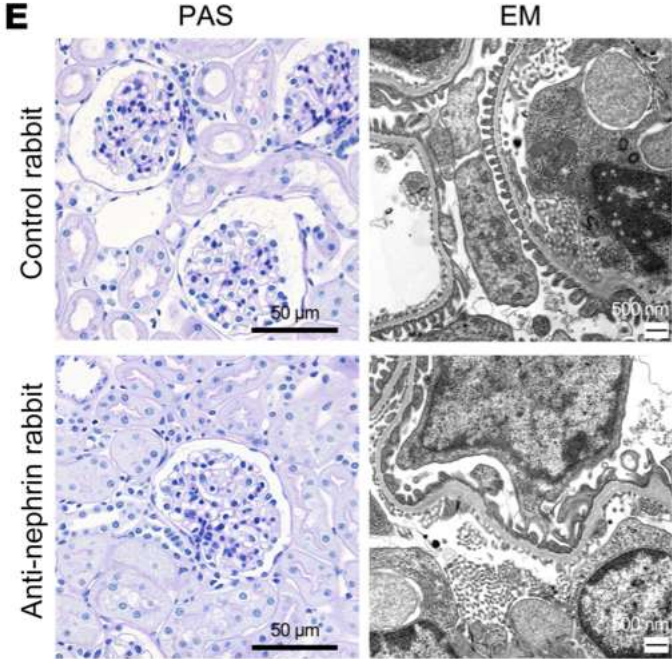
Patient with NS-derived total IgG purified from PLEX



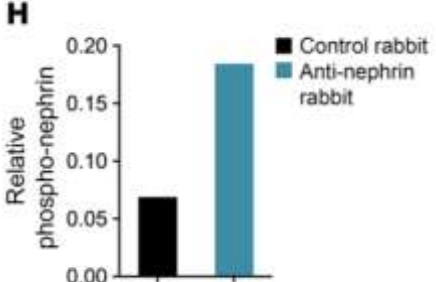
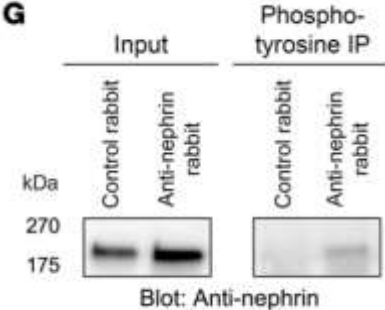
Nephrotic Syndrome
MCD-like pattern



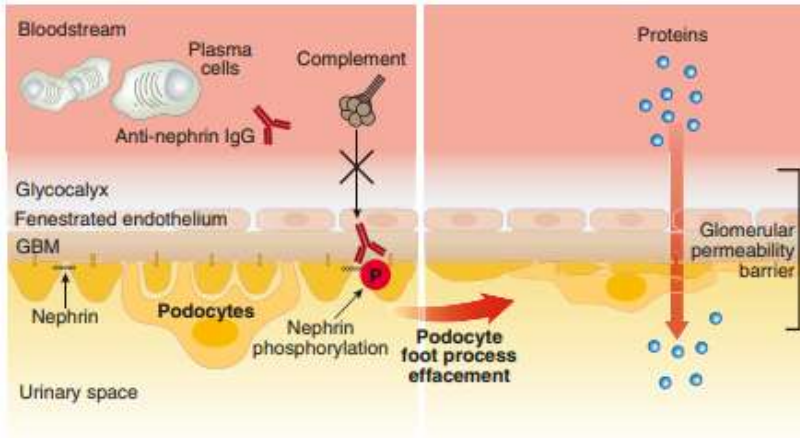
React to rabbit glomerular lysat++



Nephrin phosphorylation



Anti-nephrin antibodies: proposed mechanism of action



Vivarelli et al. KI 2025

But some previous studies showed decreased nephrin phosphorylation in MCD

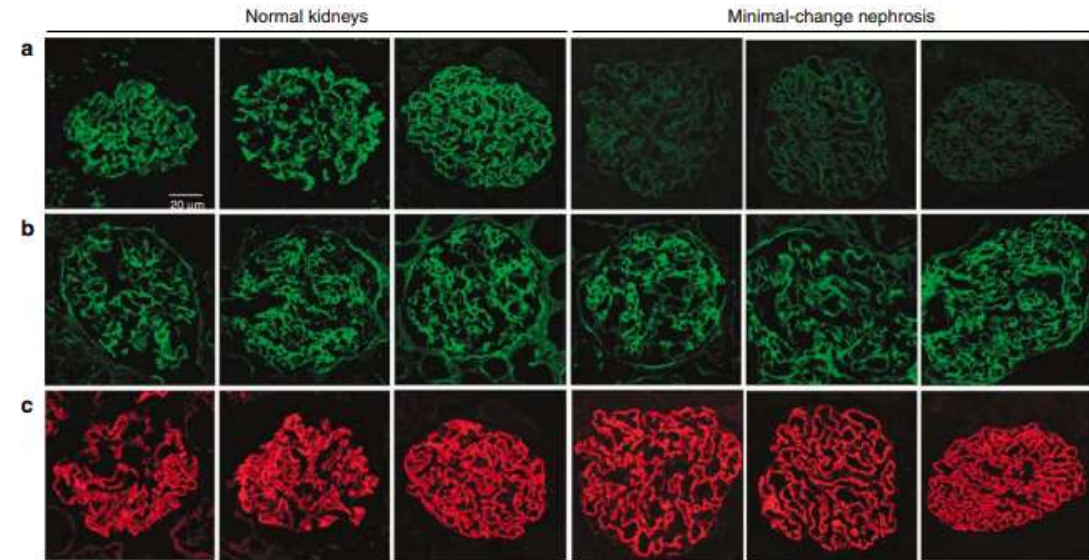
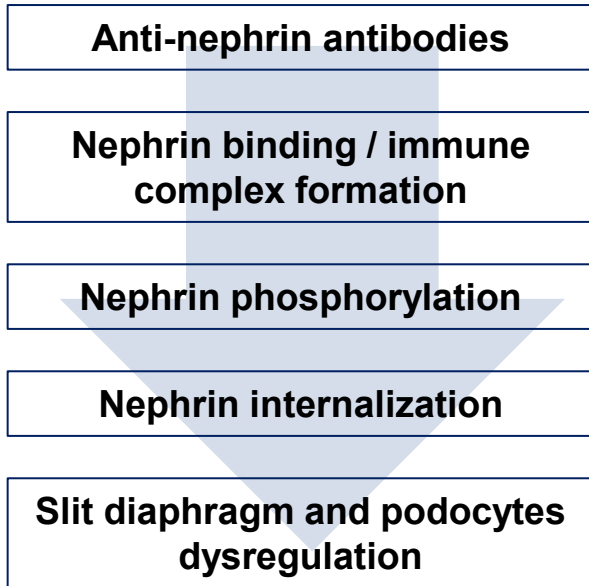
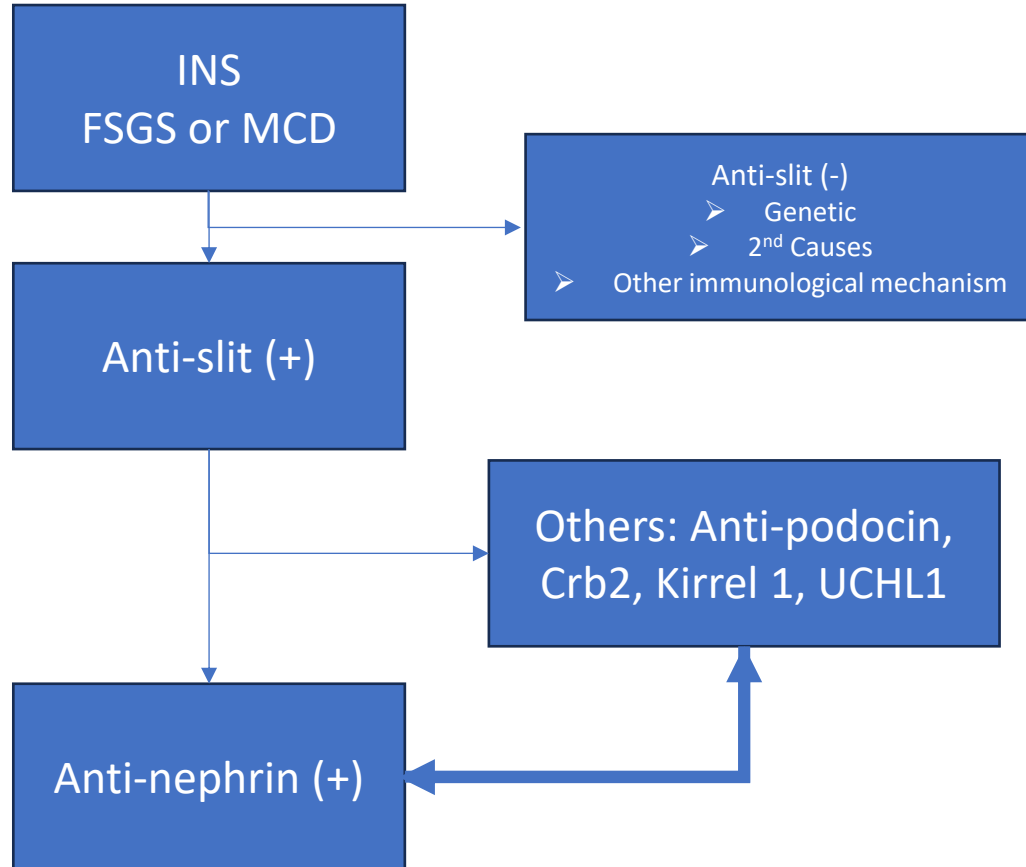


Figure 6 | Immunofluorescence of phosphorylated nephrin, total nephrin, and podocin in glomeruli of human normal kidneys and minimal change nephrosis. Biopsy specimens from donor kidneys and minimal change nephrosis were immunostained with anti-pY1228 (a), anti-total nephrin (b), and anti-podocin (c) antibodies. Three representative cases were shown. Signals were detected by using LSM510-Meta confocal microscopy under a constant laser and detector setting.

Uchida et al. KI 2008

Conclusion

Redefining the Nosological Framework



Circulating anti-nephrin antibodies

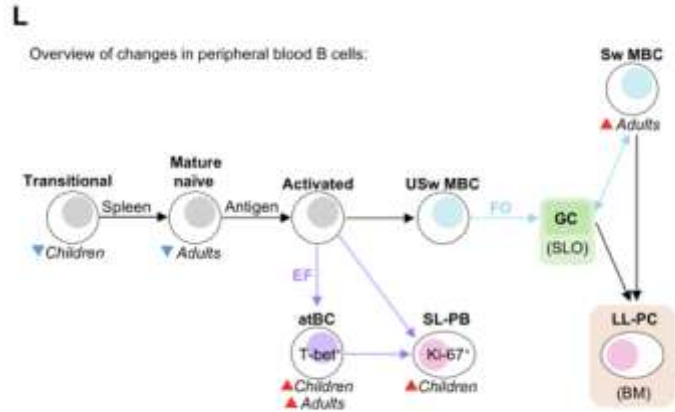
- Prevalence 70% in IS-naive MCD
- Primary FSGS <20%
 - ➔ Recurrent FSGS >70%
- ➔ Prognostic and therapeutic management tool?
 - ➔ In steroid-resistant forms: **may facilitate intensification**
 - ➔ Interest in monitoring and relapse prediction?
 - ➔ In pre-transplant setting ++



Thank You



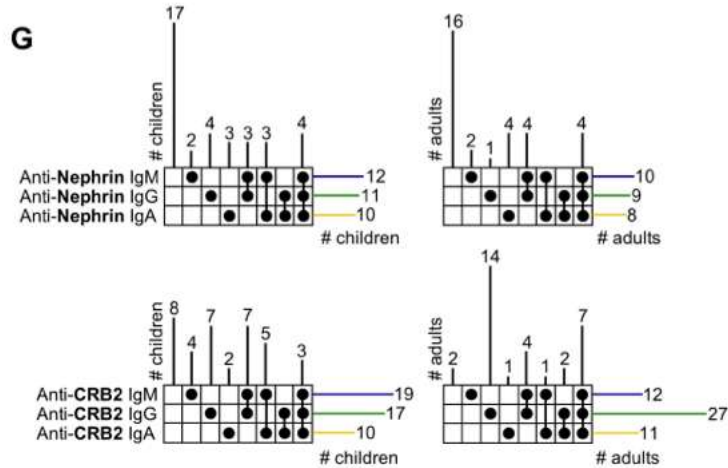
Anti-nephrin nephrin : Mechanisms of action



Réponse GC (>adulte)

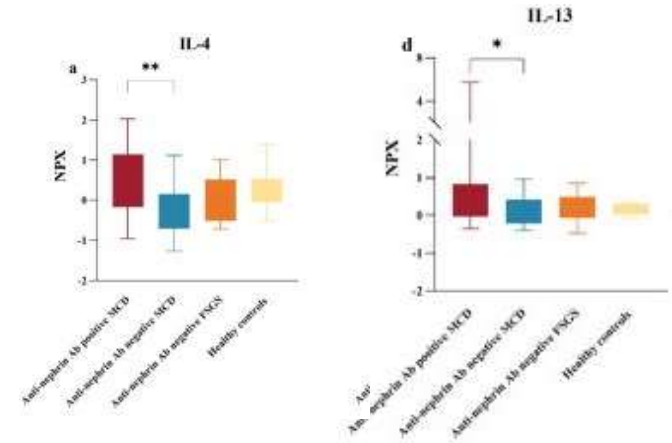
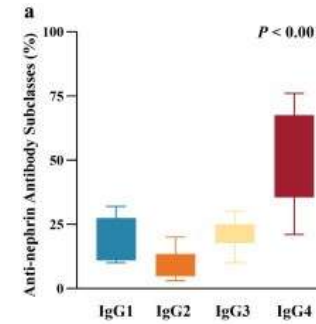
Réponse EF (>enfant)

Al aubodah Bioxv 2026



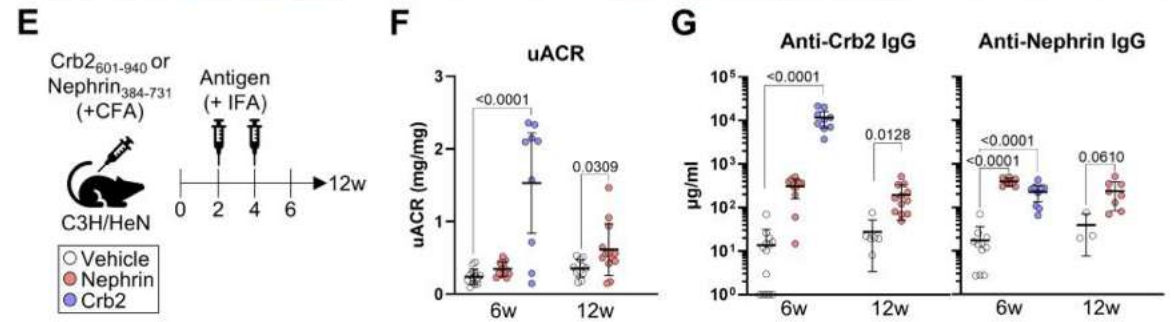
Enfant Plus d'auto anticorps IgM > Phase précoce ?

60 MCD (14 enfants)



Augmentation Antinephrine-IgG4
Réponse Th2
Phase plus tardive ?

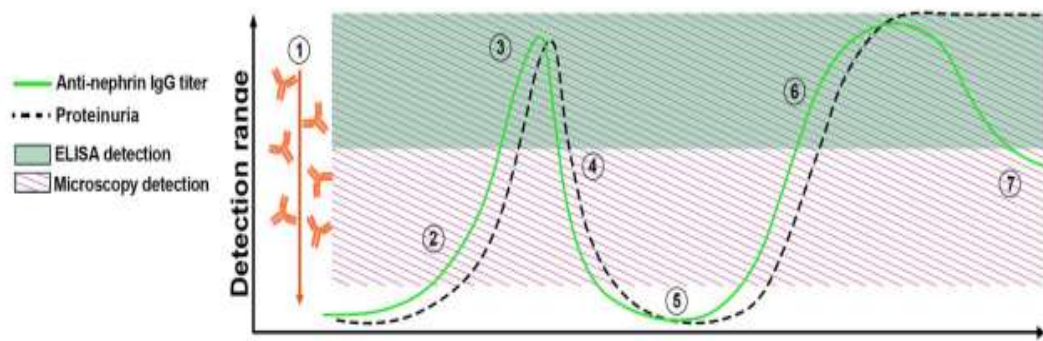
Guo Annals of medicine 2026



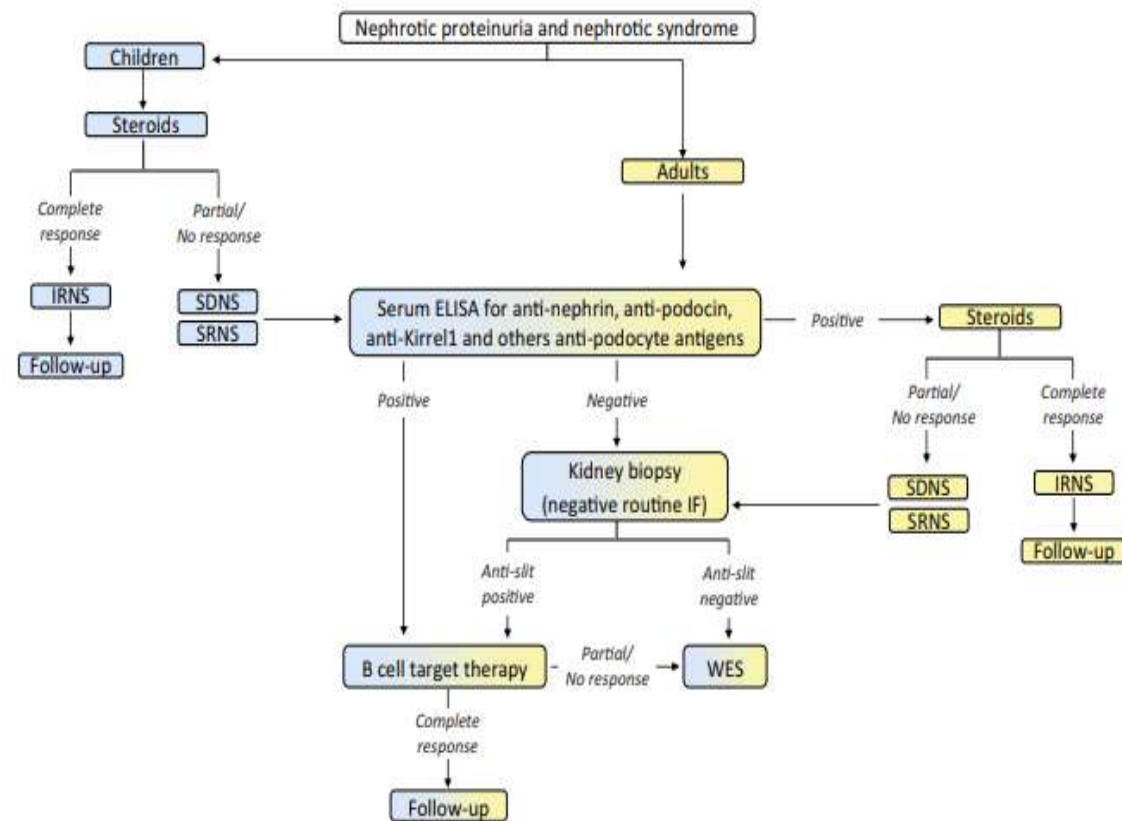
Intermolecular Spreading

Al aubodah Bioxv 2026

Conclusion



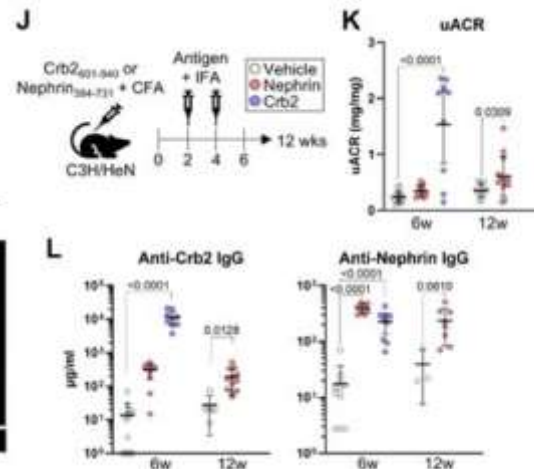
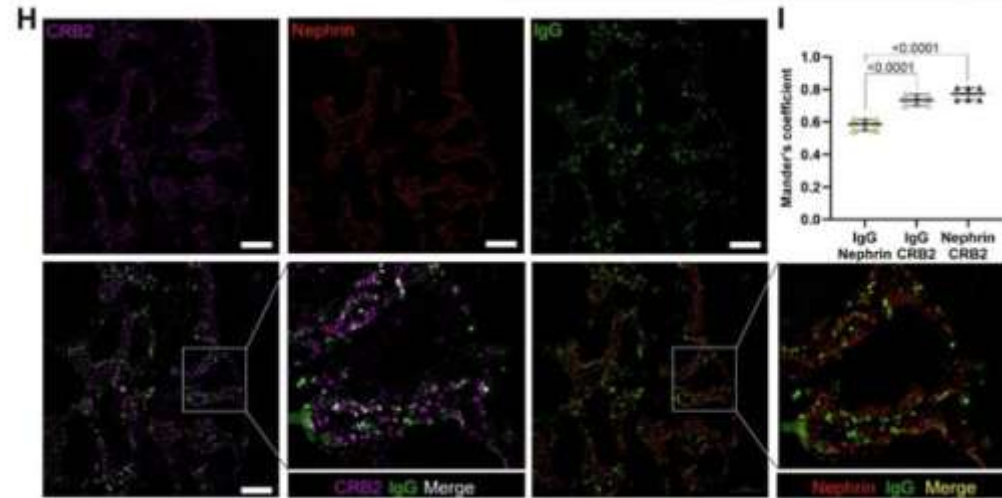
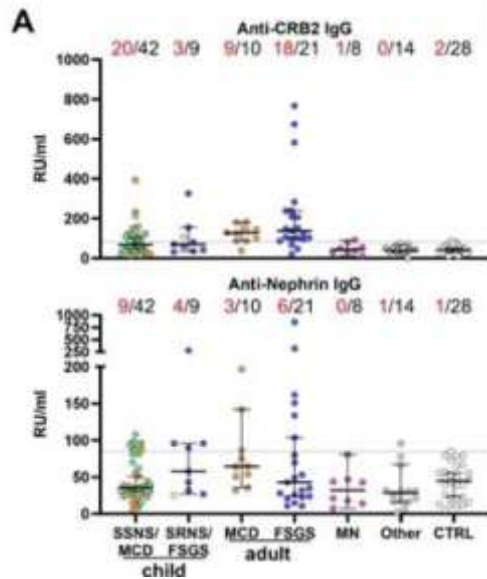
	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥	⑦
	Immunological onset	Immune deposits and podocyte injury	Seropositivity	IS therapy	Remission	Relapse	Severe hypogammaglobulinemia
Antibody production	+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Serum anti-nephrin IgG	-	-	+	-	-	+	-
Glomerular anti-nephrin IgG	-	+	+	+	-	+	+
Proteinuria	-	+	+	+	-	+	+



Anti-nephrin nephrin : Mechanisms of action

Epitope spreading ?

Some patients:
Anti CRB2 / Anti Nephrines



Mouse immunization contre Crb2

- Develop anti-Crb2 autoantibodies
- Mais aussi of anticorps anti nephrines

Study type

- Étude **Retrospective monocentric**
- Cohort of adult patients with biopsied nephrotic syndrome

Population (n)

- **n = 114 patients**
 - MCD: 47
 - FSGS: 14
 - MN (PLA2R/NELL1): 53
- Controls: n = 40

Main results

• Distribution of Ac :

- Anti-nephrin : surtout **MCNS (~38%)**
- Anti-podocine : **non-specific**, present in several GN (↑ NELL1-MN)

• Initial severity:

- Patients Ac+ → **proteinuria ↑ and creatinine ↑**

• Prognosis/outcome:

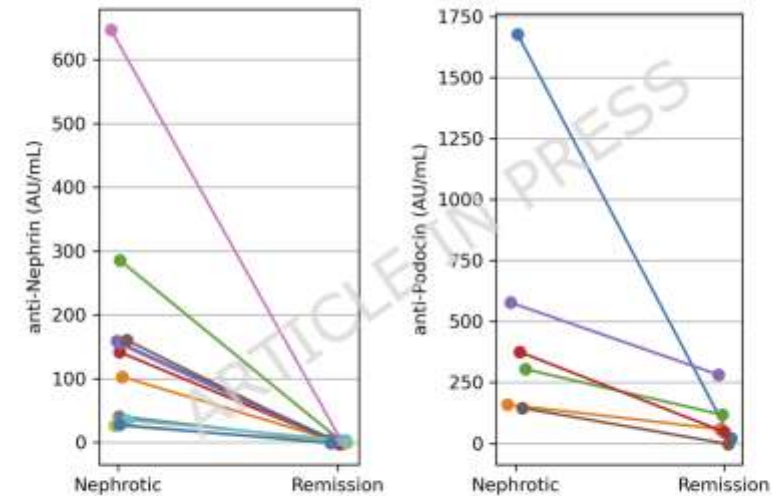
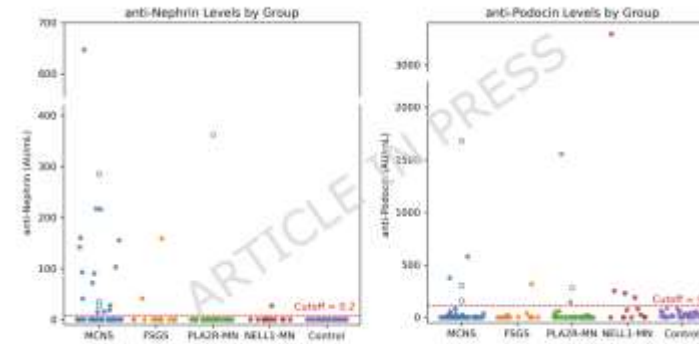
- Pas d'impact on la **initial remission**
- Mais association forte avec **SDNS**
 - OR ≈ **9–10** (independent in multivariate)

• Biological dynamics:

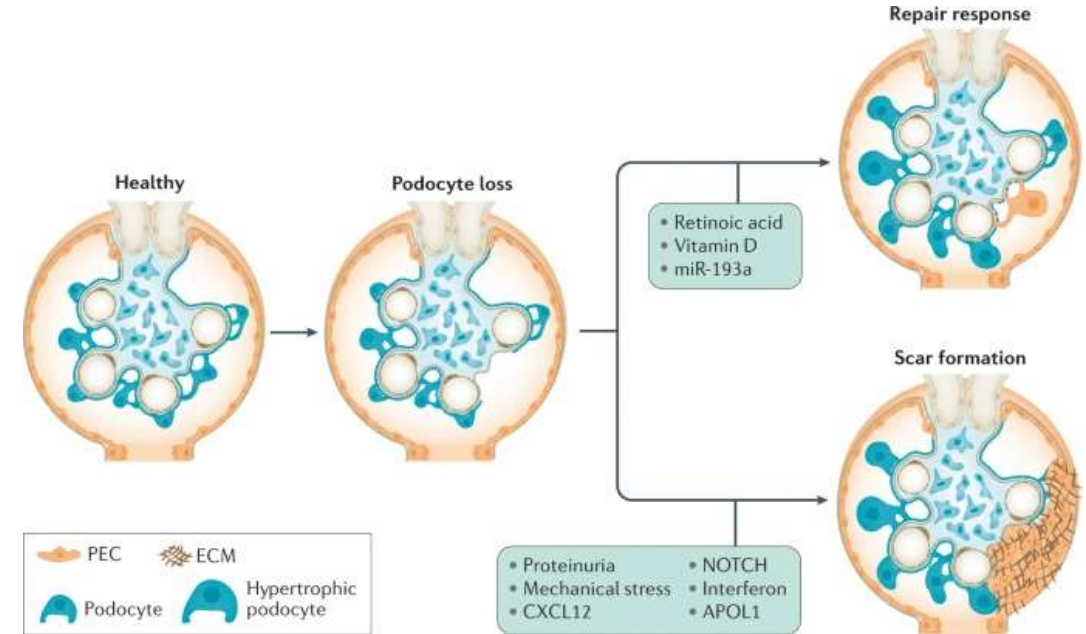
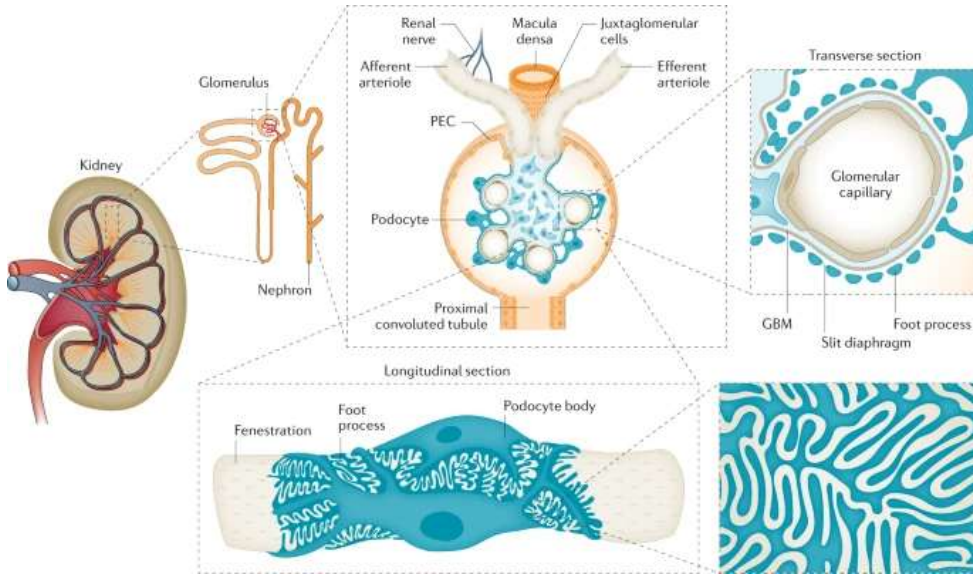
- Diminution/disparition of Ac in remission

• Stratification:

- Double positivity → **maximum risk of relapse / dependency**



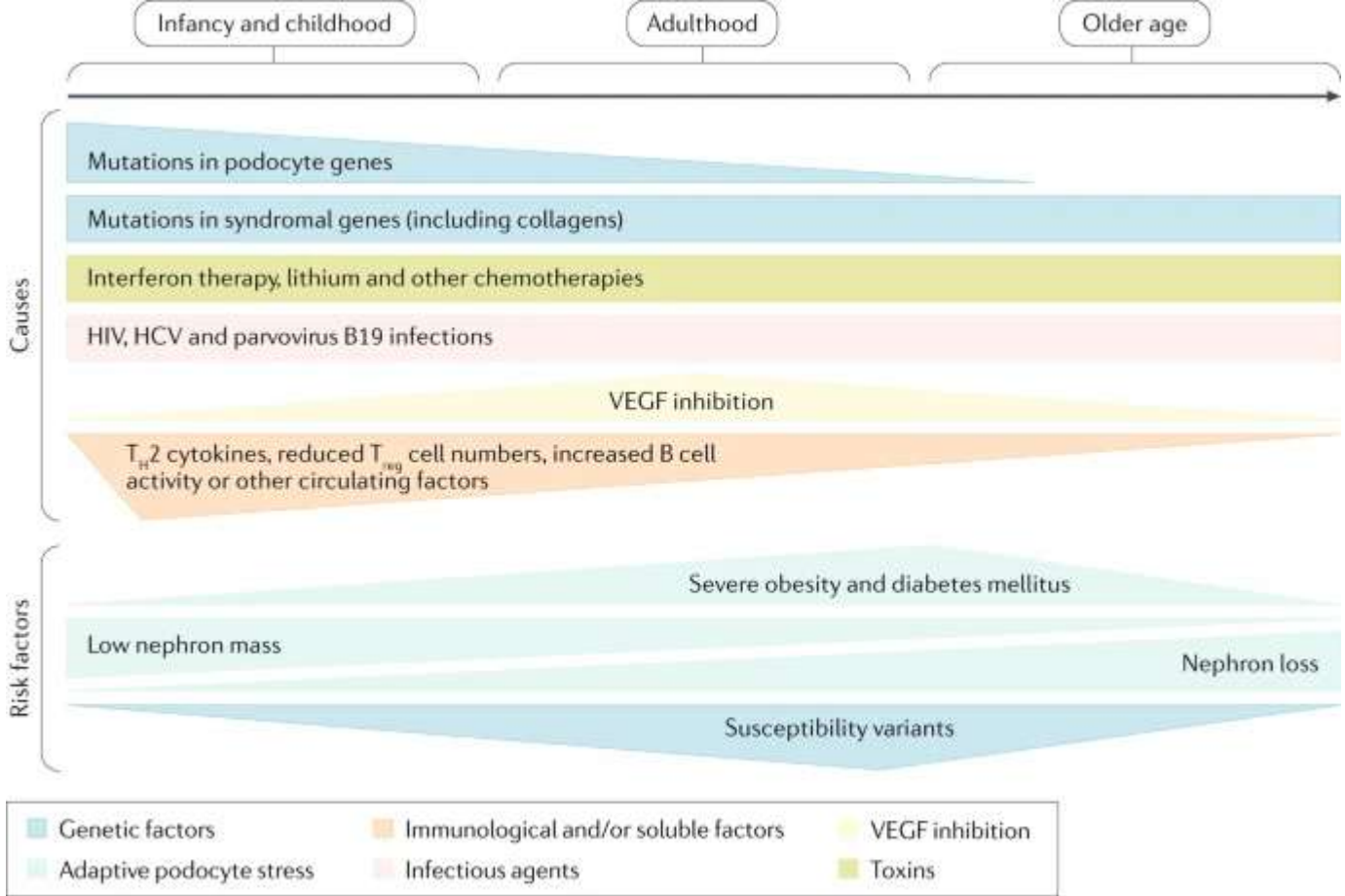
Podocyte = Primary Target



- Podocyte injury (ds le SNI : auto immune)
- Stress → remaniement cytosquelette → **foot process effacement**,, loss of adhesion and **detachment**.
- Disruption of filtration barrier → Proteinuria

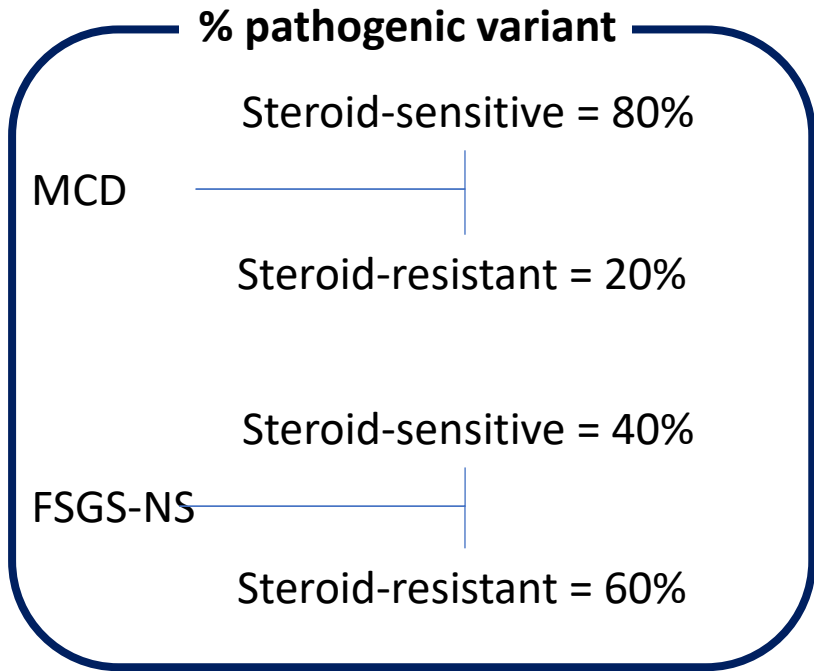
➔ MCD
➔ FSGS

Cause of podocytopathies



1. Genetic causes
2. Immunological causes
3. Causes infectieuses et toxiques.
4. Hemodynamic and metabolic causes
 - Obesity, diabetes, hyperfiltration, nephron reduction

Idiopathic Nephrotic Syndrome



30% of steroid-resistant NS = genetic

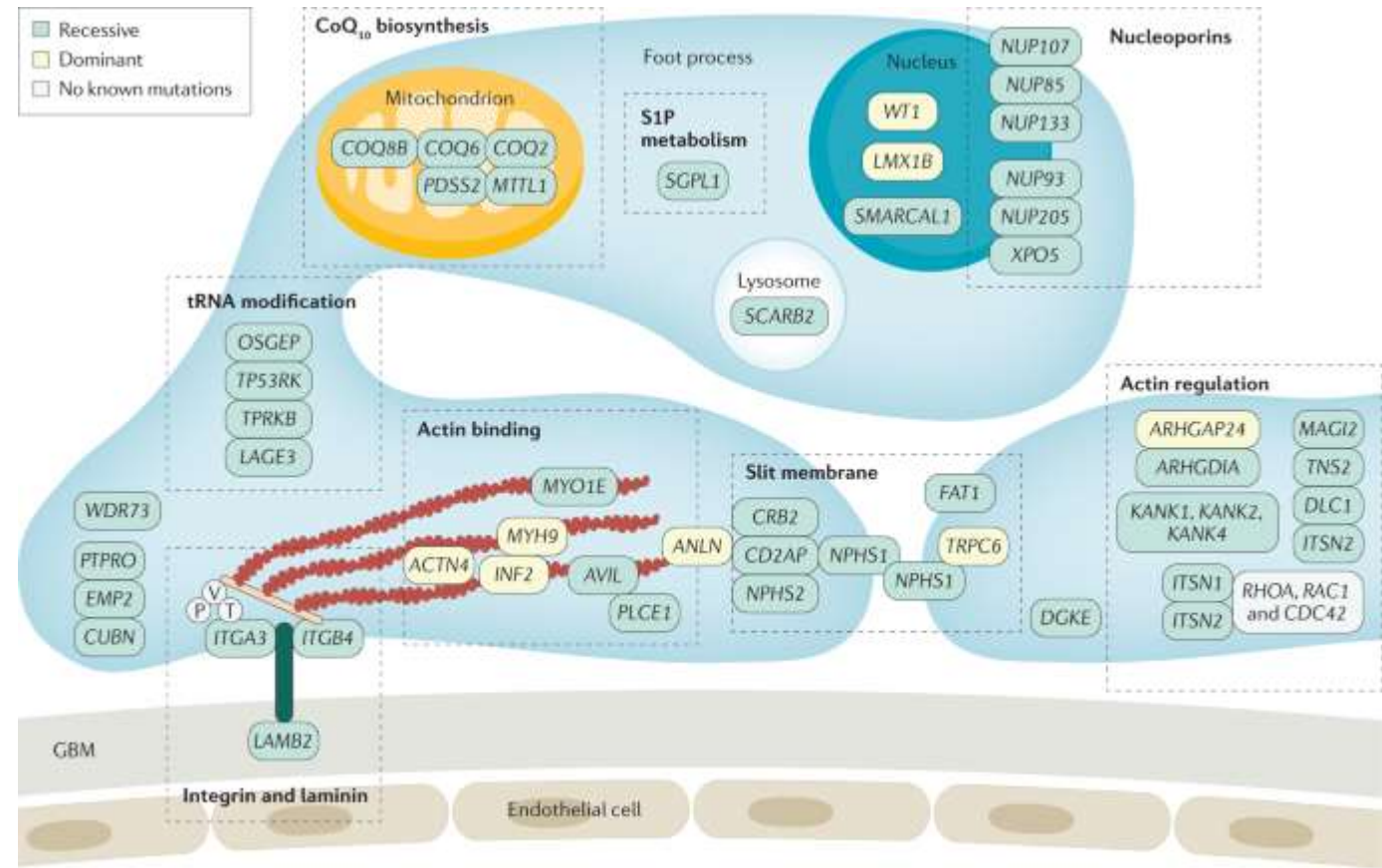
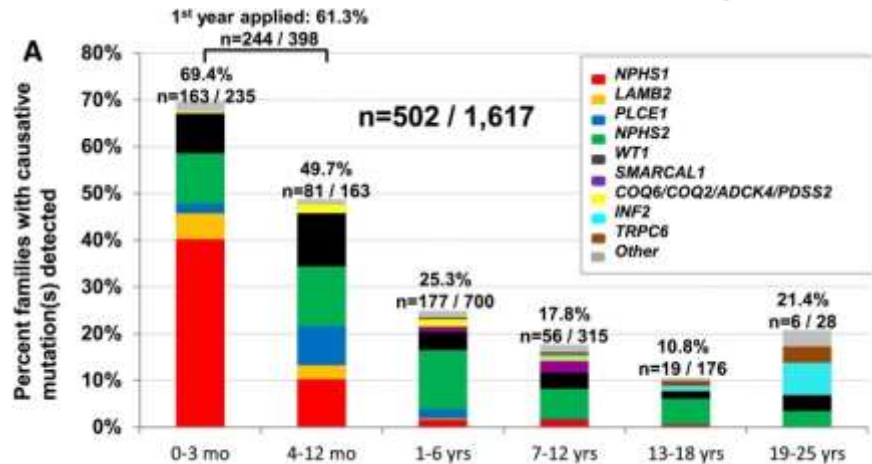
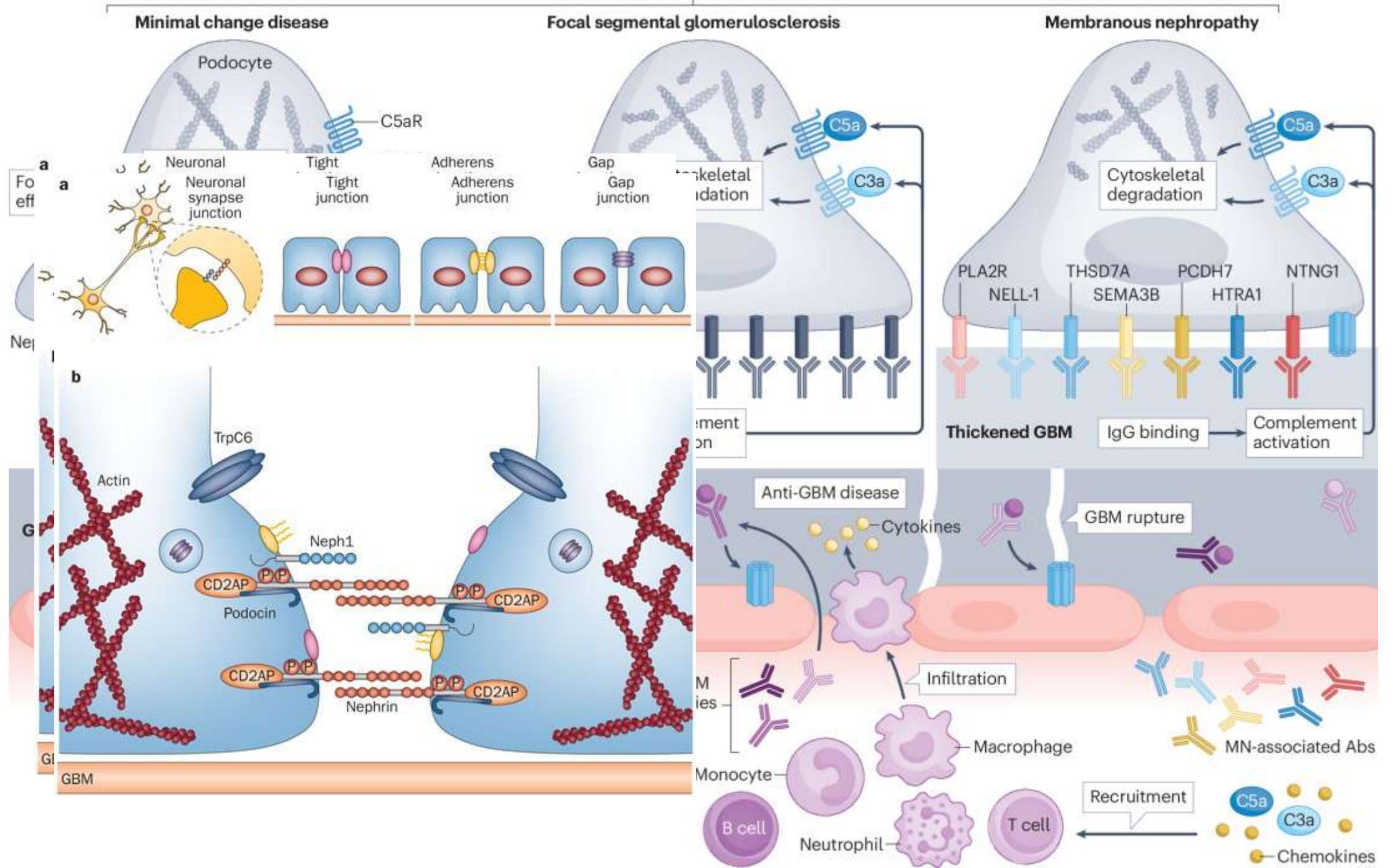


Table 1 | Genes implicated in FSGS

Function of the gene product	Gene
Slit diaphragm proteins	NPHS1, NPHS2, CD2AP, CRB2, TRPC6, FAT1
Actin binding	PLCE1, ACTN4, MYO1E, MYH9, INF2, ANLN, AVIL
Actin regulation	ARHGDI2, ARHGAP24, KANK1, KANK2, KANK4, MAGI2, DLC1, ITS1, ITS2, DAAM2
Nuclear transcription factors	LMX1B, WT1, SMARCAL1, NXF5
Nuclear pore complex proteins	NUP93, NUP85, NUP107, NUP133, NUP160, NUP205, XPO5
Mitochondrial proteins	COQ2, COQ6, COQ8B (ADCK4), PDSS2, MTTL1
KEOPS complex (tRNA modification)	OSGEP, TP53RK, TPRKB, LAGE3
Lysosomal proteins	SCARB2
Adhesion proteins	ITGA3, ITGB4, LAMB2
Glomerular basement membrane proteins	COL4A3, COL4A4, COL4A5, COL4A6, LAMA5
Other	SGPL1, CUBN, PTPRO, WDR73, EMP2, DGKE, ALG1

Kidney-specific immune-mediated diseases



The Role of Anti-B Cell Therapies

- Steroid-sparing aim
 - En entretien, 1st intention (RIFIREIN)
 - CD/FR
 - SOC jusqu'à peu : tacrolimus/ MMF
 - Ritux
 - Obi
 - Dara
 - Steroid-R
 - Standard of Care
 - Data
 - Nephrotoxic ?