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Human Peripheral Blood Neutrophil Isolation for Interrogating the Parkinson's Associated LRRK2 Kinase Pathway by Assessing Rab10 Phosphorylation

Fan, Ying; Tonelli, Francesca; Padmanabhan, Shalini; Baptista, Marco; Riley, Lindsey; Smith, Danielle

Published in:

JoVE: Journal of Visualized Experiments

DOI:

[10.3791/58956](https://doi.org/10.3791/58956)

Publication date:

2020

Document Version

Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication in Discovery Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Fan, Y., Tonelli, F., Padmanabhan, S., Baptista, M., Riley, L., Smith, D., Marras, C., Howden, A., Alessi, D., & Sammler, E. (2020). Human Peripheral Blood Neutrophil Isolation for Interrogating the Parkinson's Associated LRRK2 Kinase Pathway by Assessing Rab10 Phosphorylation. *JoVE: Journal of Visualized Experiments*, (157), Article e58956. <https://doi.org/10.3791/58956>

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1 **TITLE:**

2 **Human Peripheral Blood Neutrophil Isolation for Interrogating the Parkinson's Associated**
3 **LRRK2 Kinase Pathway by Assessing Rab10 Phosphorylation**

4
5 **AUTHORS AND AFFILIATIONS:**

6 Ying Fan^{1,*}, Francesca Tonelli^{1,*}, Shalini Padmanabhan², Marco A.S. Baptista², Lindsey Riley²,
7 Danielle Smith³, Connie Marras⁴, Andrew Howden⁵, Dario R. Alessi¹, Esther Sammler^{1,6}

8
9 ¹MRC Protein Phosphorylation and Ubiquitylation Unit, School of Life Sciences, University of
10 Dundee, Dundee, UK

11 ²The Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research, Grand Central Station, New York, NY,
12 USA

13 ³Department of Medical and Molecular Genetics, Indiana University School of Medicine,
14 Indianapolis, IN, USA

15 ⁴Morton and Gloria Shulman Movement Disorders Centre and the Edmond J. Safra Program in
16 Parkinson's Disease, Toronto Western Hospital, University of Toronto, Canada

17 ⁵Division of Cell Signalling and Immunology, School of Life Sciences, University of Dundee,
18 Dundee, UK

19 ⁶Division of Molecular and Clinical Medicine, School of Medicine, Ninewells Hospital and Medical
20 School, University of Dundee, Dundee, UK

21
22 *These authors contributed equally.

23
24 **Corresponding Author:**

25 Esther Sammler (e.m.sammler@dundee.ac.uk)

26
27 **Email Addresses of Co-authors:**

28 Ying Fan (y.z.fan@dundee.ac.uk)

29 Francesca Tonelli (f.tonelli@dundee.ac.uk)

30 Shalini Padmanabhan (spadmanabhan@michaeljfox.org)

31 Marco A.S. Baptista (mbaptista@michaeljfox.org)

32 Lindsey Riley (lriley@michaeljfox.org)

33 Danielle Smith (dchampag@iu.edu)

34 Connie Marras (connie.marras@utoronto.ca)

35 Andrew Howden (a.howden@dundee.ac.uk)

36 Dario R. Alessi (d.r.alessi@dundee.ac.uk)

37
38 **KEYWORDS:**

39 Parkinson's disease, biomarkers, LRRK2 kinase, peripheral blood neutrophils, Rab proteins,
40 vesicle trafficking, protein phosphorylation

41
42 **SUMMARY:**

43 Mutations in the leucine rich repeat kinase 2 gene (LRRK2) cause hereditary Parkinson's disease.
44 We developed an easy and robust method for assessing LRRK2-controlled phosphorylation of

45 Rab10 in human peripheral blood neutrophils. This may help identify individuals with increased
46 LRRK2 kinase pathway activity.

47

48 **ABSTRACT:**

49 The leucine rich repeat kinase 2 (LRRK2) is the most frequently mutated gene in hereditary
50 Parkinson' disease (PD) and all pathogenic LRRK2 mutations result in hyperactivation of its kinase
51 function. Here, we describe an easy and robust assay to quantify LRRK2 kinase pathway activity
52 in human peripheral blood neutrophils by measuring LRRK2-controlled phosphorylation of one
53 of its physiological substrates, Rab10 at threonine 73. The immunoblotting analysis described
54 requires a fully selective and phosphospecific antibody that recognizes the Rab10 Thr73 epitope
55 phosphorylated by LRRK2, such as the MJFF-pRab10 rabbit monoclonal antibody. It uses human
56 peripheral blood neutrophils, because peripheral blood is easily accessible and neutrophils are
57 an abundant and homogenous constituent. Importantly, neutrophils express relatively high levels
58 of both LRRK2 and Rab10. A potential drawback of neutrophils is their high intrinsic serine
59 protease activity, which necessitates the use of very potent protease inhibitors such as the
60 organophosphorus neurotoxin diisopropylfluorophosphate (DIFP) as part of the lysis buffer.
61 Nevertheless, neutrophils are a valuable resource for research into LRRK2 kinase pathway activity
62 in vivo and should be considered for inclusion into PD biorepository collections. In particular, as
63 the LRRK2-controlled Rab10 phosphorylation assay has already been used to identify individuals
64 with hyperactivation of the LRRK2 kinase pathway, they might eventually benefit from future
65 treatment with LRRK2 kinase inhibitors.

66

67 **INTRODUCTION:**

68 Attempts to slow or stop Parkinson's disease (PD) have thus far failed. The discovery of
69 hyperactivating mutations in the leucine rich repeat kinase 2 (LRRK2) that cause and/or increase
70 the risk for PD has led to the development of LRRK2 kinase inhibitors¹⁻³. These have now entered
71 clinical trials⁴. The exact function of LRRK2 is unclear, but a major advancement has been the
72 identification of a subset of Rab GTPase proteins, including Rab10, as the first bona fide
73 physiological substrates of the LRRK2 kinase⁵⁻⁷. Key challenges in the era of disease-modifying
74 therapeutics are biochemical markers of LRRK2 kinase activation status and target engagement
75 of LRRK2 kinase inhibitors.

76

77 So far, the principal pharmacokinetic marker for LRRK2 inhibitors in vivo has been a cluster of
78 constitutively phosphorylated serine residues of LRRK2, in particular serine 935, that become
79 dephosphorylated in response to diverse LRRK2 inhibitors^{8,9}. However, serine 935
80 phosphorylation does not correlate with intrinsic cellular LRRK2 kinase activity because it is not
81 directly phosphorylated by LRRK2 and is still phosphorylated in kinase-inactive LRRK2¹⁰. LRRK2
82 kinase activity correlates well with autophosphorylation of serine 1292, but it is in practical terms
83 not a suitable readout for endogenous LRRK2 kinase activity by immunoblot analysis of whole
84 cell extracts due to the current lack of reliable and phosphospecific antibodies for this site^{10,11}.

85

86 We have developed a robust and easy assay to quantify LRRK2 kinase pathway activity in human
87 peripheral blood cells that measures LRRK2-controlled phosphorylation of its physiological target
88 protein Rab10 at threonine 73¹¹. Peripheral blood is easily accessible by venesection, which is a

89 low risk and quick procedure that causes minimal discomfort. We focus on human peripheral
90 blood neutrophils because they constitute an abundant (37–80% of all white blood cells) and
91 homogeneous cell population that expresses relatively high levels of both LRRK2 and Rab10¹¹.
92 Furthermore, peripheral blood neutrophils can be isolated quickly and efficiently by employing
93 an immunomagnetic negative approach. To ensure that the subsequent observed Rab10
94 phosphorylation is mediated by LRRK2, each batch of neutrophils is incubated with or without a
95 potent and selective LRRK2 kinase inhibitor (we use and recommend MLI-2)^{2,12}. This is then
96 followed by cell lysis in a buffer containing the protease inhibitor diisopropyl fluorophosphate
97 (DIFP), which is necessary for suppressing the intrinsic serine protease activity that is known to
98 be high in neutrophils¹³. For the final analysis by quantitative immunoblotting, we recommend
99 using the MJFF-pRab10 rabbit monoclonal antibody that specifically detects the Rab10 Thr73-
100 phosphoepitope and does not cross-react with other phosphorylated Rab proteins¹⁴. Selectivity
101 and specificity of this antibody was validated in overexpression models of different Rab proteins
102 and a A549 Rab10 knock-out cell line¹⁴. Thus, we measure the difference in Rab10
103 phosphorylation in neutrophil lysates that have been treated with and without a potent and
104 selective LRRK2 kinase inhibitor². Alternatively, samples could also be analyzed by other
105 methods, such as quantitative mass spectrometry.

106

107 In conclusion, LRRK2-controlled Rab10 phosphorylation is a superior marker of LRRK2 kinase
108 activity to LRRK2 phosphorylation at serine 935 and human peripheral blood neutrophils are a
109 valuable resource for PD research into LRRK2. Our protocol provides a robust and easy assay to
110 interrogate LRRK2 pathway activity in peripheral blood neutrophils and allows biochemical
111 stratification of individuals with increased LRRK2 kinase activity¹⁵. Importantly, such individuals
112 may benefit from future LRRK2 kinase inhibitor treatment.

113

114 **PROTOCOL:**

115

116 According to local UK regulation all manipulations and pipetting of human blood are undertaken
117 in a category 2 biological safety cabinet. All procedures were performed in compliance with local
118 ethics review board and all participants have provided informed consent.

119

120 **1. Preparation**

121

122 1.1. Prepare 0.1 mL of EDTA Stock Solution 1 containing 100 mM EDTA in phosphate-buffered
123 saline (PBS).

124

125 1.2. Prepare 60 mL of EDTA Stock Solution 2 containing 1 mM EDTA in PBS.

126

127 1.3. Prepare lysis buffer containing 50 mM Tris-HCl (pH = 7.5), 1% (v/v) Triton X-100, 1 mM EGTA,
128 1 mM Na₃VO₄, 50 mM NaF, 10 mM β-glycerophosphate, 5 mM sodium pyrophosphate, 0.27 M
129 sucrose, 0.1% (v/v) β-mercaptoethanol, 1x protease inhibitor cocktail, 1 μg/mL microcystin-LR,
130 and 0.5 mM diisopropyl fluorophosphate (DIFP).

131

132 NOTE: The authors routinely use an EDTA-free product, but an EDTA-containing protease
133 inhibitor cocktail should also work. The lysis buffer can be made in advance without the β -
134 mercaptoethanol, protease inhibitors, microcystin-LR, and DIFP, and stored at 4 °C until use.
135 Ensure that the β -mercaptoethanol, protease inhibitors, microcystin-LR, and DIFP is only added
136 immediately before use.

137
138 CAUTION: DIFP is toxic and should be handled with care in a fume hood following local health
139 and safety risk assessment. DIFP can be added to the lysis buffer and used immediately.
140 Alternatively, the complete lysis buffer containing all other components, including DIFP, can be
141 aliquoted and stored at -80 °C for subsequent use for at least 4 weeks.

142

143 **2. Neutrophil isolation from whole blood**

144

145 2.1. Collect 10 mL of blood into a blood collection tube. Mix gently by inverting tubes 7–8x.

146

147 2.2. Transfer 10 mL of blood into a 50 mL conical tube.

148

149 2.3. Add 100 μ L of EDTA Stock Solution 1 to the blood. Mix gently.

150

151 2.4. Add 500 μ L of the isolation cocktail (50 μ L/mL) from the neutrophil isolation kit (**Table of**
152 **Materials**) to the whole blood sample.

153
154 2.5. Vortex the magnetic beads from the neutrophil isolation kit for 30 s before use in order to
155 resuspend the very fine magnetic beads.

156
157 2.6. Add 500 μ L of the magnetic beads to the blood sample and mix gently by inverting the tube
158 several times.

159
160 2.7. Incubate at room temperature (RT) for 5 min.

161
162 2.8. Fill the tube to 50 mL with EDTA Stock Solution 2. Mix by very gently pipetting up and down
163 2–3x.

164
165 2.9. Place the tube into the magnet and remove the lid to avoid subsequent agitation of the tube.

166
167 2.10. Incubate for 10 min at RT.

168
169 2.11. Carefully pipette the enriched cell suspension that contains the neutrophils into a new 50
170 mL conical tube.

171
172 NOTE: Do not touch the side of the tube that is in contact with the magnet and avoid collection
173 and perturbation of the red blood cells at the bottom of the tube. Leave approximately 10 mL of
174 the red blood cell suspension behind at the bottom of the tube.

175

176 2.12. Vortex the magnetic beads for 30 s before use and add 0.5 mL of the magnetic beads to the
177 tube containing the enriched neutrophils. Mix gently by inverting the tube.

178

179 2.13. Incubate at RT for 5 min.

180

181 2.14. Place the tube into the magnet and remove the lid to avoid subsequent agitation.

182

183 2.15. Incubate at RT for 5 min.

184

185 2.16. Carefully pipette the enriched cell suspension that contains the neutrophils into a new 50
186 mL conical tube.

187

188 NOTE: Do not touch the side of the tube that is in contact with the magnet. Leave approximately
189 5 mL of the suspension at the bottom of the tube.

190

191 2.17. To ensure the complete removal of magnetic beads from the cell mixture, place the tube
192 containing the enriched cells into the magnet.

193

194 2.18. Incubate for 10 min at RT.

195

196 2.19. Carefully pipette the enriched cell suspension that now contains pure neutrophils into a
197 new 50 mL conical tube.

198

199 NOTE: Do not touch the side of the tube that is in contact with the magnet. Leave approximately
200 5 mL of the suspension at the bottom of the tube.

201

202 2.20. Mix the isolated cells with 1 mM EDTA Stock Solution 2 to a final volume of approximately
203 41 mL. Pipette up and down to mix.

204

205 2.21. Divide the solution equally into two tubes with approximately 20 mL in each tube.

206

207 2.22. Centrifuge both tubes at 335 x *g* for 5 min.

208

209 2.23. During this centrifugation take MLI-2 inhibitor stock (200 μ M/1,000x concentration) out of
210 the -80 °C freezer and leave at RT for subsequent use.

211

212 2.24. Immediately after the centrifugation step and without agitation of the tubes, pour off the
213 supernatant without disturbing the neutrophil pellets. Resuspend each cell pellet in 10 mL of cell
214 culture media (**Table of Materials**) at RT by gently pipetting cells up and down 4x.

215

216 **3. LRRK2 kinase inhibitor treatment of pure neutrophils**

217

218 3.1. Label one tube "DMSO" and the other tube "MLi-2".

219

220 3.2. To the "DMSO" labeled tube, add 10 μ L of DMSO and mix gently by pipetting up and down
221 2x with a 10 mL pipette. To the "MLi-2" labeled tube, add 10 μ L of 200 μ M MLi-2 stock solution
222 (final concentration 200 nM) and mix gently by pipetting up and down 2x with a 10 mL pipette.
223

224 3.3. Incubate the samples for 30 min at RT. Mix gently by inversion every 10 min during the
225 incubation.
226

227 3.4. During the incubation period, remove 0.5 M DIFP stock from the -80 $^{\circ}$ C freezer and place in
228 a fume hood on ice. Remove 1 mg/mL microcystin-LR stock solution from the -80 $^{\circ}$ C freezer and
229 leave at RT to thaw. Take an aliquot (0.25 mL) of the lysis buffer out of the freezer, allow it to
230 defrost at RT, and then place it on ice for subsequent use.
231

232 3.5. Prepare 1 mL of cell culture medium containing 1 μ L of DMSO and call this DMSO
233 resuspension buffer. Prepare 1 mL of RPMI media containing 1 μ L of 200 μ M MLi-2 and call this
234 MLi-2 resuspension buffer.
235

236 3.6. After the 30 min incubation period, centrifuge both tubes at 335 x *g* for 5 min.
237

238 3.7. Carefully discard the supernatant in each tube without disturbing the neutrophil pellet.
239

240 3.8. For the DMSO labeled sample gently resuspend the pellet in 1 mL of the DMSO resuspension
241 buffer and for the MLi-2 labeled tube, resuspend the pellet in 1 mL of the MLi-2 resuspension
242 buffer.
243

244 3.9. Transfer the resuspended cell pellets to corresponding centrifugation tubes labeled "DMSO"
245 and "MLi-2" and centrifuge both tubes at 335 x *g* for 3 min.
246

247 3.10. During the centrifugation step, prepare the lysis buffer. In the fume hood carefully add 0.25
248 μ L of 0.5 M DIFP solution as well as 0.25 μ L of 1 mg/mL microcystin-LR to the 0.25 mL lysis buffer.
249 Mix and leave on ice until use.
250

251 NOTE: Add DIFP to the lysis buffer within 15 min of cell lysis, because DIFP is relatively unstable
252 in an aqueous solution.
253

254 3.11. Immediately after the centrifugation, carefully and completely remove all the supernatant
255 with a pipette without disturbing the neutrophil pellet and place the tubes on ice.
256

257 3.12. Immediately add 100 μ L of lysis buffer containing DIFP and microcystine-LR to each tube.
258 Using a 100–200 μ L pipette, resuspend the cell pellets by pipetting up and down about 5–10x.
259

260 3.13. Lyse the cells on ice for 10 min.
261

262 3.14. Centrifuge tubes at 20,000 x *g* for 15 min at 4 $^{\circ}$ C to remove cell debris.
263

264 3.15. Transfer the "DMSO" and "MLi-2" supernatants containing the neutrophil lysates into new
265 centrifugation tubes. Discard the debris pellet.

266
267 NOTE: The neutrophil lysates are now ready for use or can be snap frozen in liquid nitrogen and
268 stored at -80 °C for future analysis.

269
270 **REPRESENTATIVE RESULTS:**

271 Our assay allows interrogating the activation of the PD-associated LRRK2 kinase in human
272 peripheral blood neutrophils with LRRK2-dependent Rab10 phosphorylation as a readout.
273 Neutrophils are a homogenous and abundant peripheral white blood cell population that
274 expresses high levels of both the LRRK2 and Rab10 proteins (**Figure 1**). The only other cell
275 population among the remaining peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) with high copy
276 numbers of both proteins are monocytes, but these make up only 2–12% of white blood cells.
277 This indicates that peripheral blood neutrophils are a more suitable biomatrix for studying LRRK2-
278 controlled Rab10 phosphorylation.

279
280 When isolating peripheral blood neutrophils from 10 mL of blood with our procedure, between
281 0.5–0.75 mg of total protein lysate per donor was obtained (**Figure 2A**), which is sufficient for a
282 significant number of immunoblot analysis for which only 10 µg per gel lane are required. While
283 checking purity and viability of cells is not routinely performed, we demonstrated for three
284 healthy donors that the purity of isolated neutrophils is between 94–98% and the viability of cells
285 ~99% as determined by flow cytometry analysis using the CD66b–Fluorescein isothiocyanate
286 neutrophil marker and 4',6-Diamidino-2'-phenylindole dihydrochloride (DAPI) staining for
287 viability (**Figure 2A**).

288
289 While the focus of this publication is the isolation and processing of neutrophils from peripheral
290 blood and not the analysis by quantitative Western blotting, **Figure 2B** demonstrates that the
291 MJFF-pRab10 monoclonal antibody that specifically detects Rab10 phosphorylated at threonine
292 73 revealed robust signals in the neutrophil samples, which were markedly suppressed by
293 treatment with a potent and specific LRRK2 kinase inhibitor, in this case MLI-2.

294
295 Neutrophils contain high levels of serine proteases that can affect subsequent Western blot
296 analysis. While DIFP effectively suppresses the high protease activity in neutrophils, it is a potent
297 organophosphorus neurotoxin and it would be desirable to replace it with an equally effective
298 but less toxic protease inhibitor, such as phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride (PMSF). We found that
299 Rab10 phosphorylation was equally well preserved when DIFP was replaced by PMSF at a
300 concentration of 2.5 mM (**Figure 2C**). However, the integrity of the LRRK2 protein was
301 compromised when using PMSF compared to DIFP, suggesting that the larger LRRK2 protein is
302 more susceptible to degradation (**Figure 2C**).

303
304 We have previously shown that another Parkinson's disease-causing gene mutation VPS35
305 D620N results in hyperactivation of the LRRK2 kinase by a yet unknown mechanism¹⁵.
306 Neutrophils from three people with PD harboring a disease-causing heterozygous VPS35 D620N
307 mutation were isolated using the method described in this article (**Figure 3**). Neutrophil samples

308 from nine healthy donors were isolated as controls¹⁵. Immunoblot analysis using the MJFF-
309 pRab10 monoclonal antibody demonstrates a significant, ~3x increase in Rab10 phosphorylation
310 at Thr 73 in neutrophils from Parkinson's patients with a VPS35 D620N mutation compared to
311 the controls. The total Rab10 protein expression is similar in all 12 neutrophil samples.

312

313 **FIGURE LEGENDS:**

314 **Figure 1: Abundance of LRRK2 and Rab10 proteins in immune cells isolated from human blood**
315 **using data that is publicly available on the immprot database (<http://www.immprot.org>)¹⁶.** The
316 graph shows the number of protein copies per cell for LRRK2 and Rab10 in a range of peripheral
317 blood immune cells, including subsets of T cells, B cells, monocytes, NK cells, dendritic cells, and
318 the granulocytes neutrophils, basophils, and eosinophils. This figure has been modified from Fan
319 et al.¹¹.

320

321 **Figure 2: Characterization and analysis of human peripheral blood neutrophils and importance**
322 **of DIFP for the prevention of proteolytic degradation in neutrophils. (A)** Neutrophils were
323 isolated from the whole blood of three healthy donors (A, B, and C) showing purity, viability, and
324 total protein yield after cell lysis. **(B)** Neutrophils were treated with or without LRRK2 kinase
325 inhibitor (MLi-2), then lysed and subjected to quantitative immunoblot analysis with the
326 indicated antibodies via near-infrared (NIR) fluorescence imaging. **(C)** Neutrophils were isolated
327 from two healthy donors and treated with 100 nM MLI-2 for 30 min. Cells were lysed in the
328 presence of either 0.5 mM DIFP or 2.5 mM PMSF to block serine protease activity in neutrophils.
329 A and B have been modified from Mir et al.¹⁵, while C has been modified from Fan et al.¹¹.

330

331 **Figure 3: Increased LRRK2 kinase pathway activity in Parkinson's disease patients harboring a**
332 **heterozygous VPS35 D620N mutation.** Neutrophils were isolated from nine non-age-matched
333 healthy controls and three PD patients with a disease-causing heterozygous VPS35 D620N
334 mutation. The cells were treated with or without 200 nM MLI-2 for 30 min before cell lysis. **(A)** A
335 total of 10 µg of whole cell extract subjected to quantitative immunoblot analysis with the
336 indicated antibodies via near-infrared (NIR) fluorescence imaging. Immunoblots were quantified
337 for phospho-Thr73 Rab10:total Rab10 ratio **(B)**. Data were analyzed by one-way ANOVA with
338 Tukey's multiple comparison test. Data presented as means ± SD; ***p < 0.0001. This figure has
339 been modified from Mir et al.¹⁵.

340

341 **DISCUSSION:**

342 Compelling clinical, genetic, and biochemical evidence points towards an important role for
343 LRRK2 and in particular its kinase function in Parkinson's disease⁷. LRRK2 kinase inhibitors have
344 been developed and are entering clinical trials^{2,4,12}. As such there is a need for exploiting LRRK2
345 as a biomarker for target engagement as well as patient stratification. Our protocol describes a
346 robust and easy assay for analyzing LRRK2 kinase pathway activation as reflected by the
347 phosphorylation of its physiological substrate Rab10 in the homogenous pool of human
348 peripheral blood neutrophils^{11,14}. For analysis by quantitative immunoblotting, we strongly
349 recommend the use of a highly selective phosphospecific Rab10 antibody (MJFF-pRab10
350 monoclonal antibody)^{14,17}.

351

352 We use human neutrophils because they constitute a homogenous subset of peripheral blood
353 cells that make up the dominant leukocyte population^{17,18}. More importantly, neutrophils also
354 have high protein expression levels of LRRK2 and its substrate Rab10 (**Figure 1**)¹⁶. In contrast, the
355 remaining subsets of leukocytes that make up the pool of PBMCs are heterogeneous with
356 variable and predominantly low expression of LRRK2 and Rab10. Monocytes and dendritic cells
357 have high expression levels, but are low in overall abundance¹⁶.

358
359 While we recommend the use of EDTA vacutainer blood collection tubes, an anticoagulant other
360 than EDTA can be used. However, the presence of EDTA is important for the performance of the
361 neutrophil isolation kit. We therefore recommend adding EDTA to the whole blood sample so
362 that a final concentration of 1 mM EDTA is reached even if an alternative anticoagulant is used.
363 The use of the neutrophil isolation kit allows purifying neutrophils directly from human whole
364 blood by immunomagnetic negative selection in a relatively fast and easy way. The number of
365 available magnets determines how many blood samples can be processed in parallel. It is easily
366 feasible to isolate neutrophils from up to six blood samples in parallel using six magnets. A
367 potential drawback is the associated cost for commercial neutrophil isolation kits and the
368 required magnet. Alternative methods for neutrophil isolation from whole blood have been
369 described and rely on density gradient separation or fluorescence activated cell sorting (FACS),
370 which have significant drawbacks. The former is significantly more time and labor intensive and
371 at least in our hands not as reliable and efficient. The latter requires a FACS machine and
372 additional handling steps would need to be introduced, including the depletion of red blood cells
373 and cell staining, adding time to the cell isolation process. Overall, immunomagnetic isolation is
374 fast, generates a highly pure sample, and avoids excessive handling of the cells. With regards to
375 sample processing, we have previously shown that a delay between blood collection and
376 neutrophil isolation of at least up to 24 h does not result in a significant change or variation in
377 the outcome of our assay, which provides its flexibility for future clinical exploitation¹¹.

378
379 The neutrophil isolation procedure itself is very easy. We recommend vortexing the magnetic
380 beads before each use. It is also important not to disturb the magnet once the tube is inside the
381 magnet to avoid turbulence and dislodgement of the magnetic beads. Neutrophils are being
382 enriched in suspension by several rounds of immunomagnetic removal of all unwanted cells. Care
383 should be taken not to touch the side of the tube that is in touch with the magnet and during the
384 first round of isolation (step 2.11) so as not to perturb the red blood cells at the bottom of the
385 tube. After the final round of pipetting the enriched cell suspension into a new conical tube (step
386 2.24), neutrophils are immediately available for onward processing. If neutrophils are used to
387 assess LRRK2 activity in cells, neutrophils are then split into two batches and after pelleting by
388 centrifugation, resuspended in either a LRRK2 kinase inhibitor (here, MLI-2) or DMSO containing
389 cell culture medium. As dephosphorylation in the presence and rephosphorylation in the absence
390 of LRRK2 kinase inhibition are relatively rapid events, care needs to be taken to ensure that the
391 MLI-2 treated neutrophil fraction remains exposed to a LRRK2 kinase inhibitor (e.g., MLI-2) up
392 until cell lysis (steps 3.8–3.10).

393
394 There are several centrifugation steps in this protocol using 15 and 50 mL conical tubes. While
395 we routinely use the indicated centrifugation speeds in the protocol, it could be possible to

396 increase the centrifugation speed to up to 400 x g without adversely affecting the viability of the
397 cells. This results in a slightly firmer neutrophil cell pellet which might help to reduce any
398 potential loss of neutrophil material during the decanting and pipetting off the supernatant steps
399 during this protocol. This will likely increase the yield in terms of total protein lysate obtained. A
400 potential concern could be that a higher centrifugation force could activate neutrophils and
401 potentially affect subsequent analysis. Our general recommendation is to handle neutrophils
402 during every step of the protocol as gently as possible.

403
404 Our protocol uses the highly potent serine protease inhibitor DIFP (0.5 mM) as part of the
405 neutrophil lysis buffer. DIFP is a potent organophosphorus neurotoxin, and while we have
406 investigated alternative compounds, its addition to the lysis buffer was essential for the analysis
407 of LRRK2-controlled Rab10 phosphorylation in human neutrophils by immunoblotting. For
408 example, replacing DIFP with 1% (w/v) SDS has been used to lyse neutrophils in other studies¹⁹
409 and led to significant protein degradation to the extent that immunoblotting for LRRK2, Rab10,
410 and even the GAPDH loading control did not yield a signal, thus highlighting the importance of
411 including a highly potent protease inhibitor in the lysis buffer (**Figure 2C**). When replacing DIFP
412 with the less potent, but also less toxic serine protease inhibitor PMSF at 2.5 mM, Rab10
413 phosphorylation was well preserved, but the larger LRRK2 protein underwent significant
414 degradation (**Figure 2C**). In order to minimize handling of the DIFP stock solution, lysis buffer
415 containing DIFP can be prepared in batches, aliquoted and stored at -20 °C or -80 °C¹¹. With
416 regards to the analysis by quantitative immunoblotting, it is paramount to use a phosphospecific
417 antibody that has been demonstrated to be selective for only a single LRRK2 phosphorylated Rab
418 protein, such as the MJFF-pRab10 antibody used for our studies¹⁴.

419
420 The protocol can also be scaled up using a maximal volume of whole blood of up to 25 mL, which
421 is the limit that can be processed in one isolation procedure using one magnet, which is able to
422 hold 50 mL conical tubes. The only steps that would need adjustments are step 2.4 (adding 50 µL
423 of isolation cocktail per mL of blood), steps 2.6 and 2.12 (adding 50 µL of magnetic beads per mL
424 of blood), and a proportionate increase in the volume of lysis buffer for neutrophil lysis in step
425 3.12. All other steps can be kept identical.

426
427 In summary, our protocol describes an easy and robust method to isolate human neutrophils
428 from peripheral blood. Neutrophils can then be treated with and without a potent and specific
429 LRRK2 kinase inhibitor to enable the quantification of the LRRK2-controlled phosphorylation of
430 Rab10 in vivo. This can be useful for stratifying individuals according to LRRK2 kinase pathway
431 activity and for identifying those with pathway hyperactivation who might benefit from future
432 LRRK2 kinase inhibitor treatment. While this will be unlikely the case for the majority of people
433 with PD, specifically idiopathic PD, our assay has already been successfully deployed in individuals
434 carrying a rare, heterozygous mutation in another PD-associated gene, VPS35 D620N, where
435 LRRK2 kinase pathway activity is significantly increased by a yet unknown mechanism¹⁵. We had
436 previously examined LRRK2-controlled Rab 10 phosphorylation levels in a small number of
437 individuals carrying the more common LRRK2 G2019S mutation that is known to activate LRRK2
438 kinase activity only modestly by a factor of around two without detecting a significant difference
439 when compared to controls and patients with idiopathic PD with our assay^{11,14}. This and further

440 unpublished data suggest that LRRK2 kinase activity probably requires an increase of >3x in order
441 to yield a significant result using quantitative immunoblotting. However, the sensitivity for
442 detecting LRRK2 kinase pathway activation may likely be increased if deploying state-of-the-art
443 mass spectrometry technology.

444

445 We suggest that neutrophils are a valuable resource for Parkinson's disease research into LRRK2
446 kinase pathway activity and might help identifying individuals who could benefit from future
447 LRRK2 kinase inhibitor treatment.

448

449 **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:**

450 We thank the healthy volunteers who kindly donated blood for the present study. We thank The
451 Michael J. Fox Foundation for Parkinson's Research (MJFF) and the Fox BioNet study leadership
452 (FBN) for their support and input towards the written protocol and the video. We thank Professor
453 Alexander Zimprich from the University of Vienna in Austria for testing our protocol and
454 collaboration. We value the contributions of Paul Davies to the project (general manager of the
455 MRC PPU). We also recognize the excellent technical support of the MRC Protein Phosphorylation
456 and Ubiquitylation Unit (PPU) namely Chemical Synthesis (Natalia Shpiro for synthesising MLI-2),
457 MRC PPU Reagents and Services antibody purification teams (coordinated by Hilary McLauchlan
458 and James Hastie). We thank Mhairi Towler and Fraser Murdoch from Vivomotion for their help
459 with making the videos and animations. We thank Steve Soave from 81 films for assistance with
460 the final edits. Esther Sammler is supported by a Scottish Senior Clinical Academic Fellowship.

461

462 **DISCLOSURES:**

463 The authors have nothing to disclose.

464

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