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▶ To cite this version:

Melissa Parny, Agnès Coste, Agnes Aubouy, Mouna Rahabi, Melissa Prat, et al.. Differential immunomodulatory effects of six pesticides of different chemical classes on human monocytederived macrophage functions. Food and Chemical Toxicology, 2022, 163 (9), pp.112992. 10.1016/j.fct.2022.112992. hal-04008003

HAL Id: hal-04008003 https://ut3-toulouseinp.hal.science/hal-04008003v1

Submitted on 22 Jul 2024

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Differential immunomodulatory effects of six pesticides of different chemical classes on human monocyte-derived macrophage functions

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¹ Abbreviations: Catalase (CAT), Dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO), Enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA), Hank's balanced salt solution (HBSS), Heme oxygenase 1 (HMOX1), Human monocyte-derived macrophages (hMDMs), Interleukin- (IL-), Lactate dehydrogenase (LDH), Lipopolysaccharide (LPS), nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate (NADPH), NADPH oxidase 2 (NOX2), NADPH dehydrogenase quinone 1 (NQO1), Nuclear factor erythroid 2-related factor 2 (NRF2), Peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC), Protein kinase C (PKC), Reactive oxygen species (ROS), Serum-free medium (SFM), Superoxide dismutase (SOD), Toll-like receptor (TLR), Tumor Necrosis Factor (TNF), 12-O-Tetradecanoylphorbol 13-acetate (TPA), Non-opsonized zymosan (ZNO)

1. Introduction

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Pesticides are widely used in agriculture for the prevention of fungal diseases or the elimination of plant pests such as insects and mites. Pesticides are also used to eliminate unwanted plants (grass, weeds, and brush) in ornamental landscaping, parks, and gardens, and to control vector-borne diseases (e.g., malaria, dengue). This intensive use of pesticides causes environmental contamination and increases the risk of exposure to the general population through pesticide residues in water (10% exposure risks) and food (90% exposure risk) (Jakubowski and Trzcinka-Ochocka, 2005; Kapka-Skrzypczak et al., 2011; Baldi et al., 2014; Bureau et al., 2020). Many studies have shown a positive correlation between the presence of pesticide residues in food, their transfer into the body, and certain pathologies (MacIntosh et al., 2001; Curl et al., 2003, Lu et al., 2006). In utero exposure to pesticides has also been confirmed (Krieger, 2010, Tagiyeva et al., 2010). Agricultural workers can be exposed to pesticides, as shown in studies on field crops (Lebailly et al., 2009; Aprea et al., 2016), vineyards (Baldi et al., 2006; Fustinoni et al., 2014), and fruit crops such as apples (Hines et al., 2011; Moon et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Lee et al., 2018; Bureau et al., 2021). Significant exposures to pesticides can lead skin irritation, suggesting dysregulation of skin immune cells (Campbell et al., 2003; Basilicata et al., 2013; Campbell et al., 2017). Pesticides can induce immune cell dysfunction, resulting in immunosuppression leading to infectious diseases (Peden-Adams et al., 2007), or immunostimulation leading to inflammatory and allergic reactions and autoimmune diseases (Yasunaga et al., 2015; Dhouib et al., 2016; Ogasawara et al., 2017). Most in vitro immunotoxicology studies have focused on the proliferation and activity of lymphocyte subsets and natural killer cells. For example, several studies have shown that organophosphates and carbamates promote allergies, autoimmune diseases, asthma and respiratory infections inhibiting the cytotoxic activities of cells such as Natural Killer and cytotoxic T lymphocytes (Thrasher et al., 1993; Wilson et al., 2004; Li, 2007; Fukuyama et al., 2009; Corsini et al., 2013; Jorsaraei et al., 2014). Pesticide can also affect the functional state of macrophages (Corsini et al., 2006; Kurpios-Piec et al., 2015; Weis et al., 2019). Macrophages are a group of heterogeneous cells that are partly derived from blood monocytes. In addition to their role in triggering inflammation, macrophages play a key role in resolving inflammation, contribute to repairing and remodeling tissue, and participate in restoring tissue homeostasis (Aggarwal et al., 2014; Hussell and Bell, 2014). Alterations in any of these functions can lead to serious or even fatal consequences (vulnerability to infections, chronic inflammation, defective wound healing, metabolic and autoimmune diseases, and some cancers) (Belchamber and Donnelly, 2017; Fricker and Gibson, 2017; He et al., 2017; Xie et al., 2019). Increased pesticide use thus raises environmental and public health concerns. Emerging evidence suggests that exposure to environmental contaminants plays a role in the development of cancers and neurological, skin, and metabolic diseases (Thrasher et al., 2002; Colosio et al., 2003; Alavanja et al. 2004; Basilicata et al., 2013; Campbell, Baker et al., 2017; Sharma et al., 2018; Hamann et al. 2019), which are related to immune system dysregulation, and potentially to macrophage dysfunction. While the polarization of macrophages by various exogenous or endogenous stimuli, bacterial products, cytokines, chemokines, and necrotic or apoptotic cells is well documented (Gordon and Pluddemann, 2017), few studies have addressed the functional changes of human macrophages by environmental xenobiotics, particularly pesticides. For on murine macrophage cultures, it has been shown that propanil inhibited the activation of the effector functions of these cells (Salazar et al., 2008). Exposure to dithiocarbamates significantly reduced the LPS-induced release of Tumor necrosis factor (TNF)-α in the THP-1 human monocytic cell line (Corsini et al., 2006). In the same cell line, chlorpyrifos, an organophosphate insecticide, was shown to induce TNF-α mRNA expression and secretion at high doses (30 and 100 μmol.L-1) (Proskocil et al. 2019). In contrast, other in vitro studies in murine macrophages showed that a concentration of chlorpyrifos between 0.01 and 10 µmol.L⁻¹ would reduce macrophage lysosomal enzyme activity and LPS-induced production of interleukin (IL-)1β and TNF-α inflammatory cytokines (Helali et al. 2016). It has been suggested that organophosphate and carbamate insecticides inhibit enzymes with serine esterase activity and thus modulate immune response (Corsini et al., 2013; Mokarizadeh et al., 2015). As a result signal transduction pathways may be modulated and the activation of effector functions of immune cells such as the phagocytic function of macrophages may be inhibited (Pipy et al., 1982; Pipy et al., 1983; Dhouib et al., 2016). Dithiocarbamate pesticides such as mancozeb, maneb, zineb, ziram and thiram modulate macrophage functions in macrophage lineages or murine macrophages. Depending on the nature of the pesticide, experimental design and dose, studies show that macrophages are activated and an inflammatory response is induced (Weis et al., 2019) or, conversely, the activation of macrophages is decreased, along with their ability to produce inflammatory mediators (Corsini et al., 2006; Kurpios-Piec et al., 2015).

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These controversial studies on macrophages have led us to evaluate the impact of several pesticides belonging to different chemical classes, whose effects on the polarization and effector functions of human macrophages remains little studied. In this study, we used human monocyte-derived macrophages (hMDMs) from several screened donors, in contrast to most studies that have used murine or human macrophage cell lines. Indeed, some studies report that cell lines, such as RAW 264.4, are not sufficient for initial screening and assessment of immune reactivity of test products. These cell lines unlike human primary cell-derived macrophages present an incomplete

picture of the immunomodulatory properties of the test substances and, may in fact be misleading with respect to the overall bioactive potential of the substances (Merly and Smith, 2017). In vitro, we studied the immunomodulatory effects of two insecticides: chlorpyrifos and thiacloprid, and four fungicides: thiophanate, boscalid, dithianon, and captan (Table 1) which have in common their wide use in fruit arboriculture, in particular in the treatment of apple orchards in the South of France. Up to 40 pesticide applications can be made between March and the end of August each year in apple orchards. Half of them are fungicides against Venturia inaequalis, which causes apple scab. In 2019, the quantities of each pesticide sold in France were listed: chlorpyrifos (174 tons), thiacloprid (0.7 tons), thiophanate (65 tons), boscalid (99 tons), dithianon (72 tons), captan (106 tons). A recent study of apple orchards in 4 regions of France including the South of France, conducted during the 2016 and 2017 treatment seasons showed that the contamination of workers and seasonal workers per day was approximately 5.50 mg captan and 3.33 mg dithianon for operators, 24.39 mg captan and 1.84 mg dithianon for re-entry workers, and 5.82 mg captan and 0.74 mg dithianon for harvesters (Bureau et al., 2021). One criticism of this study is that only captan and dithianon were used as exposure markers, but pesticides are known to be present in apples from southern France. These data as well as data on residues found by our partners on apple fruits and leaves (data not presented) led us to test concentrations of pesticides ranging from 0.01 to 10 µmol.L⁻¹. Our study seeks to understand how certain pesticides used on apple trees in the South of France, present in apples and therefore potentially ingested by consumers, can impact the immune system by deregulating the functions of macrophage, key cells of the immune system. The immunomodulatory effects of pesticides such as captan, boscalid, dithianon, and thiacloprid are poorly known. We studied the cytotoxicity of the different pesticides at different doses and their effects on cytokine expression in hMDMs stimulated or not with LPS to evaluate the impact of the tested products on the capacity of macrophages to produce cytokines in normal or inflammatory conditions. Finally, we measured the oxidative stress of these cells by studying their ROS production. The study of mRNA expression levels of oxidative stress genes in hMDMs after exposure to these pesticides allowed us to assess the impact of these xenobiotics on the activation of antioxidant mechanisms by pesticides. The aim of this study is to better evaluate the immunotoxic risk induced by the different chemical classes of pesticides that can be found in fruit arboriculture.

Table 1

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87 List of pesticides studied

Name	Chemical family	Class
Chlorpyrifos	Organophosphate	Insecticide (NS)

Thiacloprid	Neonicotinoid	Insecticide (S)
Thiophanate	Benzimidazole	Fungicide (S)
Boscalid	Carboxamide	Fungicide (S)
Dithianon	Quinone	Fungicide (S)
Captan	Phtalimide	Fungicide (NS)

NS: non-systemic action; S: systemic action

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Reagents

The two insecticides (chlorpyrifos, thiacloprid) and the four fungicides (methyl-thiophanate, boscalid, dithianon, captan) used in fruit trees were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (France). These pesticides were dissolved in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) at a final concentration below 0.01% (v/v). DMSO, as well as lipopolysaccharide (LPS), 12-O-Tetradecanoylphorbol 13-acetate (TPA) and zymosan A of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* were also purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (France). Purity of the compounds ranged from 95.2% to 99.6% according to manufacturer specification.

2.2. Isolation of human monocyte-derived macrophages (hMDMs)

Primary human monocytes were obtained from healthy blood donors (EFS - Etablissement français du sang, Toulouse, France) and purified by a density gradient centrifugation method on Lymphoprep (Abcys) as described by Martin-Blondel et al. (2009). Written informed consent was obtained from donors under EFS contract n°21PLER2017-0002. In accordance with Articles L1243-4 and R1243-61 of the Public Health Code, the contract was approved by the French Ministry of Science and Technology. The blood was screened for possible infections: HIV (AIDS), HBV/HCV (Hepatitis B and C), HTLV (Leukemia/Lymphoma) and *Treponema Pallidum* (Syphilis). Peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) were isolated by Ficoll gradient. Monocytes were isolated from the PBMC by adherence to plastic plates for 2 h in a macrophage serum-free medium (Mφ-SFM; Life technologies) at 37°C in a humidified atmosphere containing 5% CO₂. After 2 h, the plates were rinsed twice using Hank's Balanced Salt Solution (HBSS, without calcium or magnesium) to remove nonadherent cells. The resulting adherent cells in the Mφ-SFM medium were >85% monocytes. After 24 h of culture in Mφ-SFM medium the human monocytes were differentiated into human monocyte-derived macrophages (hMDMs), characterized by decreased ROS production and myeloperoxidase activity. All protocols were performed on screened blood from at least on 3 donors.

2.3. Human monocyte-derived macrophages treatments

The concentrations of pesticides assessed in our study were: 0, 0.01, 0.1, 1 and 10 μmol.L⁻¹. These doses were calculated according to: data on the amounts of pesticide residues found in apples, the CANEPA study (Bureau et al., 2021), and the maximum residue limits (MRLs) and acceptable daily intakes (ADIs) published by the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA) for the Joint Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/World Health Organization Meeting on Pesticide Residues (Lukowicz et al., 2018; European Food Safety et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2020). Pesticides solutions (100 μmol.L⁻¹) were prepared in DMSO and stored at -20°C. Each aliquot was thawed and used once only. The required dilutions were prepared immediately prior to use in the culture media so that the DMSO level did not exceed a final concentration of 0.01%. This concentration of DMSO did not affect the different assays (viability, ROS, and cytokine production).

hMDMs cells were plated in 96-well plates at 1.5×10^5 monocytes/well or in 48-well plates at 3×10^5 monocytes/well, depending on the protocol. For evaluation of the expression levels of mRNA by qRT-PCR, the hMDMs were treated for 4 h at 37°C in 5% CO₂ with increasing concentrations of pesticides (0, 0.01, 0.1, 1 and $10 \, \mu mol.L^{-1}$) or DMSO as vehicle control (0.01% v/v final concentration). For all other protocols, the hMDMs were treated for 24 h at 37°C in 5% CO₂ with increasing concentrations of the different pesticides (0, 0.01, 0.1, 1 and $10 \, \mu mol.L^{-1}$) or DMSO as vehicle control (0.01% v/v final concentration).

2.4. Evaluation of cell viability by alamarBlue and LDH assay

Cell viability was determined by measuring lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) levels and by the alamarBlue assay, which has been shown to be more sensitive than MTT (Hamid et al., 2004). Monocytes were plated in 96-well plates at a concentration of 1.5×10^5 cells/well and treated for 24 h at 37°C with 5% CO₂, with either the presence or absence of increasing concentrations of pesticides. After 24 h of culture, 50 µL of medium was removed for the LDH assay, then 15 µL of alamarBlue reagent (ThermoFisher Scientific, Inc. cat. DAL1025) was added to 150 µL of cultured M ϕ -SFM, and the cells were incubated for another 2 h at 37°C. Absorbance at 570 nm was measured using a microplate reader (EnVision Perkin Elmer). Percentage of cell viability was calculated using the formula [(At/A0) x 100], where A0 = absorbance of cells treated with 0.01% DMSO medium, At = absorbance of cells treated with various concentrations of the pesticides. Total cellular LDH was obtained by lysing cells with lysis buffer solution for 45 min before measuring LDH activity. LDH in 50 µL culture medium or cell lysate samples was measured using LDH cytotoxicity assay kit (Pierce) according to the manufacturer's instructions. The percentage of cell lysis of the treated cells was calculated using the following equation: % Cell lysis =

[(Compound-treated LDH Activity – Spontaneous LDH activity) / (Maximum LDH Activity – Spontaneous LDH activity)] x 100]. Each experiment was repeated at least four times in triplicate.

2.5. Assessment of oxidative hyperactivity

To evaluate the impact of pesticides on the nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate (NADPH) oxidase-dependent oxidative hyperactivity (NOX2) of hMDMs, monocytes plated in 96-well plates (1.5 x 10⁵ monocytes/well) were cultured for 24 h with either the presence or absence of increasing concentrations of pesticides as described in section 2.3. After 24 h, the culture medium was removed and adherent cells were washed with HBSS and the respiratory burst of macrophages (ROS production) was assessed by chemiluminescence in the presence of 5-amino-2,3-dihydro-1,4-phthalazinedione (66 μmol.L⁻¹, luminol; Sigma-Aldrich) using a thermostatically (37°C) controlled luminometer (EnVision of Perkin Elmer). The generation of chemiluminescence was monitored continuously for 90 min in basal conditions after challenging of the macrophages, either with 12-O-tetradecanoylphorbol-13 acetate (TPA, 100 nmol.L⁻¹) or with unopsonized zymosan (ZNO, 50 ng/well), a polysaccharide prepared from the cell wall of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. Statistical analysis was performed using the area under the chemiluminescence curve expressed in counts per seconds.

2.6. Pro and anti-inflammatory cytokine measurements

Monocytes were plated in 48-well plate at 3x10⁵ monocytes/well and treated for 24 h at 37°C with 5% CO₂, with either the presence or absence of increasing concentrations of six pesticides as described in section 2.3. After 24 h of culture, the medium was removed, and adherent cells were washed with HBSS and then cultured for 4 h with either the presence or absence of LPS (10 ng.mL⁻¹) to stimulate pro-inflammatory cytokines production. The release of cytokine was evaluated using enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA) for IL-1β, TNF-α, IL-10 (InvitrogenTM) as recommended by the manufacturer's protocol.

2.7. Analysis of antioxidant gene expression in macrophages

Monocytes plated in 48-well plates with 3x10⁵ monocytes/well were treated for 4 h at 37°C in 5% CO₂, with either the presence or absence of increasing concentrations of pesticides. After 4 h, the culture medium was removed, and the adherent cells were washed with HBSS. The cells were then lysed in a solution of RLT buffer with 1% β-Mercapto-ethanol, and the total RNA was obtained with EZ-10 Spin Column (Miniprep Super Kit, Bio Basic) in accordance with the manufacturer's protocol. Reverse transcription to obtain cDNA was performed using LightCycler SYBR Green I Master (Roche Diagnostics) according to the manufacturer's recommendations (Thermo Electron, Saint Herblain, France). Quantitative real-time PCR was performed for 50 cycles (10 seconds

at 95°C, 10 seconds at 60°C, and 10 seconds at 72°C) on a LightCycler 480 system. Primers (at a final concentration of 2 μ mol.L⁻¹) were designed with the software Primer 3 and are listed in table 2. *GAPDH* gene was used as the internal reference gene. Threshold cycle values of the target genes were normalized to those of *GAPDH* and the relative change in gene expression was calculated with the 2^{- $\Delta\Delta$ Ct} method.

Human primer sequences used in qPCR analysis

Gene	Antisense	Sense
HMOX1	TCC-GAT-GGG-TCC-TTA-CAC-TC	CAA-GGA-AGC-CAG-CCA-AGA-GA
NQO1	TGG-AAG-CCA-CAG-AAA-TGC-AGA	AGG-ACC-CTT-CCG-GAG-TAA-GAA
CAT	AGC-TTA-GCG-TTC-ATC-CGT-GT	TCC-AAT-CAT-CCG-TCA-AAA-CA
SOD2	CAG-CCT-CTT-ACT-GGG-CAA-AG	CCA-GGT-CCG-TCA-ACA-GTT-TT

2.8. Statistical analysis

Results are shown as means \pm standard errors of the means (SEM). Statistical differences between two groups (treated and vehicle) were evaluated using one-way analysis of variance followed by Bonferroni's means multiple comparison method. Differences were statistically accounted for when p<0.05. In the figures, the following symbols are used: *p<0.05; **p<0.01.

3. Results

Table 2

3.1. Effect of the pesticides on cytotoxicity in hMDMs

The cytotoxicity of pesticides on hMDMs was assessed by measuring the metabolic activity of these cells by the alamarBlue (resazurin) assay, and by measuring the integrity of their membranes by the level of LDH released into the culture medium, as shown in Fig. 1. Cell viability was measured after exposure to different concentrations of pesticides ranging from 0.01 to 10 μmol.L⁻¹ or to DMSO (control) for 24 h. ¹. Figure 1 shows an absence of cell lysis assessed by analysis of LDH level in the culture medium for thiacloprid, thiophanate, and boscalid (between 0.01 and 10 umol.L⁻¹), compared to the control group (DMSO alone) after 24 h of exposure of hMDMs to these pesticides. Conversely, we showed a reduction in hMDMs viability after exposure to 10 μmol.L⁻¹ of chlorpyrifos or captan (10%) compared with the control group, and 22% after exposure to 10 μmol.L⁻¹ of dithianon. Cell permeability assessed with alamarBlue shows that 20% of hMDMs show an increase in dye permeability after exposure of hMDMs to chlopyrifos, boscalid and dithianon at any dose studied between 0.01 and 10 μmol.L⁻¹. Thiacloprid and captan have no effect at 0.01 μmol.L⁻¹. Thiophanate, which has no effect at 0.01 and 0.1 μmol.L⁻¹, increased dye permeability after exposure of hMDMs at 1 and 10 μmol.L⁻¹ (Fig. 1).

3.2. Effect of the pesticides on basal ROS production by hMDMs

In response to an inflammatory signal, macrophages produce reactive oxygen species (ROS) *via* the activation of a NADPH oxidase, NOX2. Macrophages controlled production of ROS (superoxide anion: O₂-, hydroxyl radical: HO·, hydrogen peroxide: H₂O₂) plays an essential role in the defense against pathogens. Conversely, an overproduction of ROS or a deficiency of antioxidant systems results in an inefficient immune response. Macrophages treated with 0.01 μmol.L⁻¹ chlorpyrifos increased ROS production (Fig. 2). Macrophages treated with 1 μmol.L⁻¹ thiophanate increased ROS production. dithianon and captan significantly ROS production especially in macrophages treated with 10 μmol.L⁻¹. Thiacloprid and boscalid did not alter hMDMs ROS production.

3.3. Effect of the pesticides on TPA- or ZNO-induced ROS production

Figure 3 shows the effect of pesticides on ROS production induced by 2-*O*-tetradecanoylphorbol-13-acetate (TPA) and by unopsonized zymosan particles (ZNO) from the cell wall of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. TPA directly activates NOX2 through protein kinase C (PKC) mobilization. The ROS production triggered by ZNO is coupled to the phagocytosis of the yeast walls by macrophages. Chlorpyrifos and thiophanate increased TPA-induced ROS production at 0.01 μmol.L⁻¹. Dithianon inhibited TPA-induced ROS production at 10 μmol.L⁻¹. Captan decreased TPA-induced ROS at 1 μmol.L⁻¹, and completely inhibited this ROS production at 10 μmol.L⁻¹. Boscalid and thiacloprid had no effect on TPA-induced ROS production. Interestingly, only chlorpyrifos, dithianon and captan had an immunosuppressive effect on ZNO-induced ROS production. Chlorpyrifos decreased ZNO-induced ROS production at 1 and 10 μmol.L⁻¹. Captan decreased ZNO-induced ROS production at 10 μmol.L⁻¹. Dithianon completely inhibited oxidative hyperactivity induced by ZNO at 10 μmol.L⁻¹. In contrast, thiacloprid increased ROS production at 1 and 10 μmol.L⁻¹ (Fig. 3).

3.4. Effect of the pesticides on LPS-induced pro-inflammatory cytokines production

In response to aggression or infection, macrophages can produce pro- and anti-inflammatory cytokines to initiate an inflammatory response, eliminate the pathogen and repair tissue. The direct effect of the six pesticides was therefore evaluated on the production of two pro-inflammatory cytokines (IL-1 β , TNF- α) and of an anti-inflammatory cytokine (IL-10) which plays a role in inflammation resolution. After 24 h of treatment of hMDMs, the studied pesticides were unable to trigger the production of IL-1 β , TNF- α pro-inflammatory cytokines nor the production of the IL-10 anti-inflammatory cytokine compared to control cells whatever doses.

In order to assess whether the pesticides studied could interfere with the ability of hMDMs to produce cytokines in response to an inflammatory stimulus, macrophages pre-treated with the pesticides at 0.01, 0.1, 1 and 10 μ mol.L⁻¹ for 24 h were stimulated by lipopolysaccharides (LPS) from *Escherichia coli* (10 ng.mL⁻¹) to induce the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines such as IL-1 β , TNF- α . Fig. 4 shows that none of the pesticides studied increased the ability of macrophages to produce IL-1 β , TNF- α pro-inflammatory cytokines. However, we observed that captan at 10 μ mol.L⁻¹ decreased the capacity of hMDMs to produce IL-1 β and TNF- α by more than 90%. Dithianon inhibited the production of IL-1 β and TNF- α in a dose-dependent manner at 1 and 10 μ mol.L⁻¹. Treatment of hMDMs with chlorpyrifos also decreased the production of IL-1 β at 0.01 and 0.1 μ mol.L⁻¹ and TNF- α at 0.1 and 1 μ mol.L⁻¹, whereas thiophanate, thiacloprid and boscalid had no effect on LPS-induced production of these cytokines. Fig. 4 shows that hMDMs in culture had a lower capacity to produce IL-10 than IL-1 β and TNF- α in response to LPS. However, it also showed that boscalid and thiacloprid, which did not inhibit the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines, increased IL-10 production at 0.01 μ mol.L⁻¹ and 0.1 μ mol.L⁻¹, respectively. The figure 4 also shows that thiophanate had no effect on IL-10 production whereas dithianon and captan inhibited this production at 1 and 10 μ mol.L⁻¹.

3.5. Effect of the pesticides on gene expression of molecules involved in the control of oxidative stress

In phagocytic cells such as macrophages, reactive oxygen species (ROS) are formed upon activation of NOX2

NADPH oxidase during the phagocytic process. In parallel, ROS are produced by the mitochondrial enzyme complex of the respiratory chain and *via* other cytosolic sources or within different organelles. To protect the cells from oxidative stress and maintain cell homeostasis, antioxidant enzymes such as heme oxygenase (HMOX1), NADPH quinone 1 (NQO1), catalase and superoxide dismutase are generated. Since chlorpyrifos, dithianon and captan induced or suppressed the dose-dependent production of ROS by hMDMs, we evaluated whether those three pesticides modulated the expression of antioxidant genes. To achieve this, cells were exposed for 4 h to pesticides at different doses and the expression levels of heme oxygenase (*HMOX1*), NADPH dehydrogenase quinone 1 (*NQO1*), catalase (*CAT*) and superoxide dismutase (*SOD2*) mRNAs were evaluated. Fig. 5 shows that chlorpyrifos did not induce any antioxidant genes at any concentration between 0.01 and 10 µmol.L⁻¹. Exposure of hMDMs at 1 µmol.L⁻¹ dithianon and captan increased the mRNA level of *HMOX1* and *NQO1* by more than nine times. While captan had no effect on the expression of catalase and *SOD2* mRNAs, dithianon, which weakly induced *CAT* and *SOD2* at a dose between 0.1 and 10 µmol.L⁻¹.

4. Discussion

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Macrophages can respond to various inflammatory stimuli, such as a bacterial and fungal infection, viruses, and parasites by producing ROS and cytokines. ROS production through activation of phagocytic NADPH oxidase (NOX2) is crucial in the defense against infectious diseases and is involved in inflammation and multiple signaling pathways (Segal et al., 2012). Our results show that boscalid and thiacloprid at 0.01, 0.1, 1 and 10 µmol.L⁻¹ had no effect on the basal production of ROS by macrophages. Thiophanate (1 µmol.L-1) and chlorpyrifos (0.01 μmol.L⁻¹) significantly increased the basal production of ROS. This increase in ROS production by macrophages was not accompanied by an increased production of TNF-α and IL-1β inflammatory cytokines. These results suggest that these pesticides would activate, at the indicated doses, the NADPH oxidase signaling pathway in phagocytes without affecting the signaling components involved in TNF-α and IL-1β production. Conversely, dithianon which had no effect at 0.01, 0.1 and 1 µmol.L⁻¹, suppressed the basal production of ROS at a dose of 10 μmol.L⁻¹. This suppression could be explained by the toxicity caused by dithianon on cell membrane integrity by increasing LDH levels from macrophages by 20%. However, chlorpyrifos did not suppress the basal production of ROS at a dose of 10 µmol.L⁻¹despite the 10% cell lysis assessed by LDH. Chlorpyrifos, captan and dithianon did not inhibit the basal secretion of TNF-α, IL-1β and IL-10 at a dose of 10 μmol.L-1. At this dose, dithianon and captan completely suppressed TPA-induced oxidative bursts while only dithianon also completely inhibited zymosan-induced ROS production. TPA is a diacylglycerol mimetic that triggers ROS production by acting downstream of receptors coupled to NADPH oxidase activation, via a PKC-dependent signaling pathway (Fontayne et al., 2002; Makni-Maalej et al., 2013). Zymosan, a cell-wall preparation from Saccharomyces cerevisiae, is mainly composed of β -glucans, α -mannans, chitin, proteins, and lipids (Dostert and Tschopp, 2007). Dectin-1 is the most important receptor for β-glucans (Brown et al., 2002). In human monocytes, dectin-1 has been identified as the major pattern recognition receptor (PRR) for zymosan-induced activation of NADPH oxidase and ROS production, and PKCδ has been identified as an important signaling component downstream of dectin-1 (Elsori et al., 2011). However, zymosan activates respiratory burst in macrophages through other receptors such as TLR2, and a collaboration has been established between dectin-1 and TLR2 (Gantner et al., 2003). NADPH oxidase activation by fungal or fungal extracts such as zymosan is controlled by the phosphorylation of its p47phox cytosolic component on serines located between Ser303 and Ser379 (El-Benna et al., 2009). It has been shown on human polynuclear cells that PKCδ and other PKC isoforms would be involved in zymosan induced dectin-1 dependent NADPH oxidase activation by phosphorylating p47phox on Ser315 and Ser328. It has also been shown that p38MAPKinase and MEK1/2 would be involved in NADPH oxidase activation by zymosan (Elsori et al., 2011) by phosphorylating the Ser345 residue of p47phox subunit independent of PKC isoforms (Makni-Maalej et al., 2013). Thus, dithianon which has inhibited zymosan- and TPA-induced ROS production, could act by inhibiting PKC-dependent and PKC-independent pathways such as p38MAPKinase and MEK1/2 involved respectively in dectin-1 and TLR2-mediated zymosan signaling and NADPH oxidase activation process in macrophages. Captan, which at 1 µmol.L-1 inhibits TPA-induced ROS production without inhibiting zymosaninduced ROS generation, and at 10 µmol.L-1 inhibits TPA-induced ROS production and only weakly inhibits zymosan-induced ROS generation, would have no effect on PKC-independent pathways involved in zymosan signaling and NADPH oxidase activation (Fig. 6). Chlorpyrifos, at 10 µmol.L⁻¹, also slightly decreased the ROS production induced by zymosan and TPA. It could act on dectin-1 and TLR2-mediated signaling pathways of macrophages. Chlopyrifos at 0.01 µmol.L-1 increased basal ROS production and ROS production towards TPA. Similar results were found for the pesticide ziram (Parny et al., 2021). At a dose of 0.01 μmol.L⁻¹, ziram induced a slight increase in ROS production as well as an increase in phagocytosis towards unopsonized zymosan. These results were correlated with a slight increase in the expression of the dectin-1 receptor, involved in zymosan phagocytosis. This suggests that chlorpyrifos could, similarly, activate the expression of dectin-1 on the cell surface, and thus induce ROS production at 0.01 µmol.L⁻¹. The effect of chlopyrifos on dectin-1 is not known, further studies are therefore needed to assess the effect of chlorpyrifos on the polarization of human monocytederived macrophages. When macrophages engulf foreign agents such as microbes, and other particles and are exposed to inflammatory stimuli, they secrete various cytokines depending on their polarization state. Macrophages can adopt different polarization states determined by the multiple extrinsic and intrinsic factors of their microenvironmentClassically activated macrophages (M1 polarization) have a pro-inflammatory and tumoricidal phenotype. These macrophages release pro-inflammatory cytokines such as TNF-α and IL-1β (Arango Duque and Descoteaux, 2014). The many subtypes of alternately activated macrophages (M2 polarization) can be induced depending on the intrinsic and extrinsic factors to which they are subjected. Thus, depending on the nature and type of stimulus, these macrophages express different levels of anti-inflammatory cytokines such as IL-10 and TGF-β that can promote diametrically opposed functions, trigger resolution of inflammation, and tissue repair, or suppress T cell activation. In macrophage activation, the level of production of IL-10 seems to be linked to their polarization status (Murray, 2017). Thus, M1 macrophages produce low levels of IL-10 in response to LPS, whereas M2 macrophages produce high levels of IL-10 and lesser pro-inflammatory cytokines (TNF-α, IL-1β) in response to LPS. Our results show that under our experimental conditions, macrophages derived from human monocytes produced more TNF-α and IL-1β and less IL-10 in response to LPS treatment. Based on the type of

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macrophage response to LPS after exposure to pesticides compared to the control group, the pesticides used in this study can be classified into three groups. The first group, thiophanate, boscalid and thiacloprid, did not affect the ability of macrophages to produce TNF-α, IL-1β and IL-10 in response to LPS and thus did not modify the initial polarization of macrophages. The second group, chlorpyrifos, had a biphasic effect on the production of inflammatory cytokines TNF-α and IL-1β: significant dose-dependent inhibition at 0.01 and 0.1 μmol.L⁻¹, and no effect at 1 and 10 µmol.L⁻¹, and no effect on the production of IL-10. The third group, captan and dithianon strongly inhibited the production of TNF-α and IL-1β at 10 μmol.L⁻¹ and also inhibited the secretion of IL-10 by 50%. Dithianon also inhibited the production of TNF- α and IL-1 β at 1 μ mol.L⁻¹ without affecting the membrane integrity of the cells. Finally, considering the TNF- α / IL-1 β ratio versus IL-10, we have shown that these two pesticides decrease the inflammatory response of macrophages to LPS without increasing the production of IL-10. Other studies have shown that exposure of murine macrophage or human macrophage-like cells to chlorpyrifos or methyl-thiophanate can modulate the production of inflammatory cytokines TNF- α and / or IL-1 β induced by LPS. Regarding chlorpyrifos, Helali et al. have shown an inhibition of LPS-induced TNF- α and IL-1 β productions by mouse peritoneal macrophages in a dose-dependent manner between 0.01 and 10 µmol.L⁻¹ (Helali et al., 2016). Unlike these results, we report for human monocytes after LPS activation an inhibition of TNF- α release (only at 0.01 and 0.1 μ mol.L⁻¹) and of IL-1 β (at 0.01, 0.1 and 1 μ mol.L⁻¹) while higher concentrations (1 and 10 μ mol.L⁻¹) for TNF-α and the concentration of 10 μmol.L-1 for IL-1β had no inhibitory effect. Recently, it was shown that high concentration methyl-thiophanate (290 μmol.L⁻¹/100 μg.mL⁻¹) increased the production of IL-1β, TNF-α proinflammatory cytokines, and inhibited the production of the IL-10 anti-inflammatory cytokine by the murine macrophage cell line, RAW 264.7 (Weis et al., 2019). Under our experimental conditions, methyl-thiophanate in the dose range studied, 0.01 to 10 µmol.L⁻¹, had no effect on the production of these cytokines by human macrophages. Several studies have also established that exposure to pesticides could induce oxidative damage in humans (Sharma et al., 2013; Jablonska-Trypuc et al., 2017). This is the case for chlorpyrifos which induce oxidative stress, in vitro, in neuronal cells (Xu et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2019) and zebrafish (Jin et al., 2015). When cells are exposed to oxidative stress, a defense mechanism induces the expression and regulation of a number of antioxidant enzymes to protect them from damage caused by free radicals. Many of these antioxidant enzymes, e.g. as Heme oxygenase-1 (HMOX1), NADPH quinone oxidoreductase (NQO1) (Bellezza et al., 2018), superoxide dismutase 2 (SOD2) (Dong et al., 2008; Sun et al., 2015) and catalase (Ishii et al., 2002), are under the control of the transcription factor Nuclear factor erythroid 2-related factor 2 (Nrf2). The nuclear receptor PPARy is also involved in the induction of superoxide dismutase and catalase, and peroxisome proliferator response

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elements and Nrf2-antioxidant response elements coexist in the promoter region of these genes (Zhao et al., 2015). Biochemical alterations, particularly in antioxidant enzymes have been reported in some pesticide-exposed populations (Sharma et al., 2013). Studies have also shown that certain carbamates and organophosphates can alter antioxidant index levels. It was shown that cartap (thiocarbamate) and malathion (organophosphate) were able to increase the expression levels of SOD and CAT in Wistar rats (Gupta et al., 2020) while carbofuran (carbamate) decreased the expression of these enzymes in the brains of rats (Jaiswal et al., 2016). In our experimental conditions, we have shown that chlorpyrifos between 0.01 and 10 µmol.L⁻¹ had no effect on the gene expression of antioxidant enzymes studied, HMOX1, NQO1, SOD2 and CAT. An in vitro study has shown that at higher doses (50 and 100 µmol.L⁻¹) chlorpyrifos induced ROS production and triggered antioxidant defense mechanisms in JEG-3 cells through an upregulation of catalase activity, an increase of HMOX1 mRNA levels and NRF2 at both mRNA and protein levels (Chiapella et al., 2013). Another recent study showed that chlorpyrifos at 50 μmol.L⁻¹ could activate in vitro cell pyroptosis in human neuroblastoma SH-SY5Y cells and oxidative stress through downregulation of the SIRT1 / PGC-1α / Nrf2 pathway (Zhao et al., 2019). In this study we also showed that captan (0.1 and 1 μmol.L⁻¹) and dithianon (between 0.01 and 1 μmol.L⁻¹) increased mRNA levels of antioxidant enzymes, NQO1 and HMOX1, which are known to be under the control of Nrf2-ARE signaling pathways. These results suggest that low doses of these pesticides would trigger oxidative stress in macrophages and that adaptive activation of the Nrf2 / ARE pathway would be insufficient (notably at 10 µmol.L-1) to attenuate the oxidative toxicity and the inhibition of macrophage functions like oxidative burst resulting in the release of reactive oxygen and the production of inflammatory and anti-inflammatory cytokines in response to inflammatory or infectious stimuli. In another study, we showed similar effects with a dithiocarbamate, ziram, which also inhibited at 10 μmol.L⁻¹ the pro-inflammatory functions of hMDMs via zinc and its oxidative properties by polarizing the macrophages towards an M2-type anti-inflammatory phenotype despite bacterial (LPS) or fungal (zymosan) aggression (Parny et al., 2021).

5. Conclusion

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Our findings demonstrate that among the tested pesticides, only boscalid between 0.01 and 10 μ mol.L⁻¹ had no effect on human monocyte-derived macrophages effector functions. Thiacloprid promoted the ability of macrophages to produce ROS in response to zymosan and induced the production of IL-10 in response to LPS. On the other hand, chlorpyrifos and thiophanate increased the production of ROS at low doses (0.01-0.1) while at high doses, chlorpyrifos, captan and dithianon have shown immunosuppressive effects through the reduction of ROS and pro-inflammatory cytokines such as IL-1 β and TNF- α production. Thus, these data suggest that exposure to

these pesticides including chlorpyrifos, dithianon and captan may compromise immune responses to infection and, in particular the clearance of microbial pathogens by macrophages. Given that the doses of captan and dithianon can range from 18 to 81 µmol.L⁻¹ and 2.5 to 11.2 µmol.L⁻¹ respectively in workers (Bureau et al., 2021) and that some MLRs, such as dithianon can reach doses of 10 µmol.L⁻¹ (European Food Safety et al., 2020), these three pesticides could contribute to immune system dysregulation. The information obtained from this study could be used to guide policy and regulations relating to the doses of these pesticides to minimize occupational health risks.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

- 378 **Melissa Parny:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing original draft. **Agnès Coste:** Resources, Writing
- review & editing. Agnès Aubouy: Writing review & editing. Mouna Rahabi: Writing review & editing.
- 380 Melissa Prat: Writing review & editing. Bernard Pipy: Conceptualization, Methodology, Writing original
- draft, Supervision. Investigation, Michel Treilhou: Conceptualization, Writing review & editing, Supervision,
- 382 Project administration, Funding acquisition.

Declaration of competing interest

- The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could
- have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

386 Acknowledgment

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- We thank Marie Salon and Jose Bernad for their external advice. Thanks also to Timothy Chubb of TDC
- 388 SERVICES, for his proofreading and expertise as an English translator. This research was funded by a grant from
- CIFRE-Association Nationale de la Recherche et de la Technologie (ANRT) awarded to M. Parny (2017/0057).

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FIGURE LEGENDS

603

- Fig.1. Effect of the pesticides on the cytotoxicity of human monocyte-derived macrophages (hMDMs)
- Monocytes were treated with each pesticide (chlorpyrifos, thiacloprid, thiophanate, boscalid, dithianon, captan) at
- 606 different concentrations (0.01, 0.1, 1 and 10 μmol.L⁻¹) for 24 h. Cells treated with DMSO alone (0.01%) were used
- as controls. The toxicity of each pesticide to hMDMs was measured by alamarBlue and LDH assay. The data were
- shown as the mean ± SEM of three healthy triplicate donors. *p<0.05, **p<0.01 compared to cells treated with
- DMSO alone (Bonferroni multiple comparison test).
- 610 **Fig.2.** Effect of pesticide exposure on the production of ROS by hMDMs
- The cells were treated with each pesticide (chlorpyrifos, thiacloprid, thiophanate, boscalid, dithianon, captan) at
- different concentrations (0.01, 0.1, 1 and 10 µmol.L⁻¹) for 24 h. Cells treated with DMSO alone (0.01%) were used
- as controls. The production of reactive oxygen species was determined by chemiluminescence as described in
- "Materials and Methods". The data were shown as the mean \pm SEM of three healthy donors made of triplicate.
- *p<0.05, **p<0.01 compared to cells treated with DMSO alone (Bonferroni multiple comparison test).
- 616 Fig.3. Impact of the pesticides on TPA- or ZNO- induced ROS production
- Monocytes were treated with each pesticide (chlorpyrifos, thiacloprid, thiophanate, boscalid, dithianon, captan) at
- 618 different concentrations (0.01, 0.1, 1 and 10 μmol.L⁻¹) for 24 h. Cells treated with DMSO alone (0.01%) were used
- as controls. The production of reactive oxygen species was determined on cells stimulated with TPA or ZNO by
- chemiluminescence as above. The data was shown as the mean \pm SEM of three healthy donors made in triplicate.
- *p<0.05, **p<0.01 compared to cells treated with DMSO alone (Bonferroni multiple comparison test).
- Fig.4. Impact of the pesticides on IL-1 β , TNF- α and IL-10 cytokine secretion by LPS- stimulated hMDMs
- Monocytes were treated with each pesticide (chlorpyrifos, thiacloprid, thiophanate, boscalid, dithianon, captan) at
- different concentrations (0.01, 0.1, 1 and 10 μmol.L⁻¹) for 24 h. To simplify the figure, only the 10 μmol.L⁻¹ dose
- has been represented. Cells treated with DMSO alone (0.01%) were used as controls. The level of IL-1β, TNF-α
- and IL-10 was measured in the culture medium by ELISA. To induce inflammation, after 24 h, LPS were added
- to induce the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines such as IL-1 β and TNF- α . The data were shown as the
- mean \pm SEM of three healthy donors made in triplicate. *p<0.05, **p<0.01 compared to cells treated with DMSO
- alone (Bonferroni multiple comparison test).

630	Fig.5. Effect of chlorpyrifos, dithianon and captan on the expression of genes involved in the control of oxidative
631	stress
632	Monocytes were treated with an insecticide (chlorpyrifos) or with the two fungicides (dithianon, captan) at
633	different concentrations (0.01, 0.1, 1 and 10 μ mol.L ⁻¹) or with DMSO alone (0.01%) as control for 4 h. General
634	expression of the antioxidant enzymes (heme oxygenase (HMOX1), NADPH quinone dehydrogenase 1 (NQO1),
635	catalase (CAT) and superoxide dismutase 2 (SOD2)) was evaluated in the hMDMs by qRT-PCR as described in
636	the section "Materials and Methods". The results were represented in fold induction relative to control (DMSO).
637	The data were shown as the mean \pm SEM of three healthy donors made in triplicate. *p<0.05, **p<0.01 compared
638	to cells treated with DMSO alone (Bonferroni multiple comparison test).
639	Fig 6. Effect of chlorpyrifos, dithianon and captan on protein kinase C (PKC) dependent and independent signaling
640	pathways
641	Chlorpyrifos and dithianon inhibited both PKC-dependent and independent pathways while captan inhibited only
642	the PKC-dependent pathway.











