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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 1. Introduction

2 Pesticides are widely used in agriculture for the prevention of fungal diseases or the elimination of plant pests 3 such as insects and mites. Pesticides are also used to eliminate unwanted plants (grass, weeds, and brush) in 4 ornamental landscaping, parks, and gardens, and to control vector-borne diseases (e.g., malaria, dengue). This 5 intensive use of pesticides causes environmental contamination and increases the risk of exposure to the general 6 population through pesticide residues in water (10% exposure risks) and food (90% exposure risk) (Jakubowski 7 and Trzcinka-Ochocka, 2005; Kapka-Skrzypczak et al., 2011; Baldi et al., 2014; Bureau et al., 2020). Many studies 8 have shown a positive correlation between the presence of pesticide residues in food, their transfer into the body, 9 and certain pathologies (MacIntosh et al., 2001; Curl et al., 2003, Lu et al., 2006). In utero exposure to pesticides 10 has also been confirmed (Krieger, 2010, Tagiyeva et al., 2010). Agricultural workers can be exposed to pesticides, 11 as shown in studies on field crops (Lebailly et al., 2009; Aprea et al., 2016), vineyards (Baldi et al., 2006; Fustinoni 12 et al., 2014), and fruit crops such as apples (Hines et al., 2011; Moon et al., 2013; Kim et al., 2015; Lee et al., 13 2018; Bureau et al., 2021). Significant exposures to pesticides can lead skin irritation, suggesting dysregulation of 14 skin immune cells (Campbell et al., 2003; Basilicata et al., 2013; Campbell et al., 2017). Pesticides can induce 15 immune cell dysfunction, resulting in immunosuppression leading to infectious diseases (Peden-Adams et al., 16 2007), or immunostimulation leading to inflammatory and allergic reactions and autoimmune diseases (Yasunaga 17 et al., 2015; Dhouib et al., 2016; Ogasawara et al., 2017). Most in vitro immunotoxicology studies have focused 18 on the proliferation and activity of lymphocyte subsets and natural killer cells. For example, several studies have 19 shown that organophosphates and carbamates promote allergies, autoimmune diseases, asthma and respiratory 20 infections inhibiting the cytotoxic activities of cells such as Natural Killer and cytotoxic T lymphocytes (Thrasher 21 et al., 1993; Wilson et al., 2004; Li, 2007; Fukuyama et al., 2009; Corsini et al., 2013; Jorsaraei et al., 2014). 22 Pesticide can also affect the functional state of macrophages (Corsini et al., 2006; Kurpios-Piec et al., 2015; Weis 23 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 30 pesticide use thus raises environmental and public health concerns. Emerging evidence suggests that exposure to 31 environmental contaminants plays a role in the development of cancers and neurological, skin, and metabolic 32 diseases (Thrasher et al., 2002; Colosio et al., 2003; Alavanja et al. 2004; Basilicata et al., 2013; Campbell, Baker 33 et al., 2017; Sharma et al., 2018; Hamann et al. 2019), which are related to immune system dysregulation, and 34 potentially to macrophage dysfunction. While the polarization of macrophages by various exogenous or 35 endogenous stimuli, bacterial products, cytokines, chemokines, and necrotic or apoptotic cells is well documented 36 (Gordon and Pluddemann, 2017), few studies have addressed the functional changes of human macrophages by 37 environmental xenobiotics, particularly pesticides. For on murine macrophage cultures, it has been shown that 38 propanil inhibited the activation of the effector functions of these cells (Salazar et al., 2008). Exposure to 39 dithiocarbamates significantly reduced the LPS-induced release of Tumor necrosis factor (TNF)- α in the THP-1 40 human monocytic cell line (Corsini et al., 2006). In the same cell line, chlorpyrifos, an organophosphate 41 insecticide, was shown to induce TNF- α mRNA expression and secretion at high doses (30 and 100 μ mol.L⁻¹) 42 (Proskocil et al. 2019). In contrast, other in vitro studies in murine macrophages showed that a concentration of 43 chlorpyrifos between 0.01 and 10 µmol.L⁻¹ would reduce macrophage lysosomal enzyme activity and LPS-induced 44 production of interleukin (IL-)1 β and TNF- α inflammatory cytokines (Helali et al. 2016). It has been suggested 45 that organophosphate and carbamate insecticides inhibit enzymes with serine esterase activity and thus modulate 46 immune response (Corsini et al., 2013; Mokarizadeh et al., 2015). As a result signal transduction pathways may 47 be modulated and the activation of effector functions of immune cells such as the phagocytic function of 48 macrophages may be inhibited (Pipy et al., 1982; Pipy et al., 1983; Dhouib et al., 2016). Dithiocarbamate pesticides 49 such as mancozeb, maneb, zineb, ziram and thiram modulate macrophage functions in macrophage lineages or 50 murine macrophages. Depending on the nature of the pesticide, experimental design and dose, studies show that 51 macrophages are activated and an inflammatory response is induced (Weis et al., 2019) or, conversely, the 52 activation of macrophages is decreased, along with their ability to produce inflammatory mediators (Corsini et al., 53 2006; Kurpios-Piec et al., 2015).

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 60 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 61 immunomodulatory effects of two insecticides: chlorpyrifos and thiacloprid, and four fungicides: thiophanate, 62 63 boscalid, dithianon, and captan (Table 1) which have in common their wide use in fruit arboriculture, in particular 64 in the treatment of apple orchards in the South of France. Up to 40 pesticide applications can be made between 65 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 66 tons), thiacloprid (0.7 tons), thiophanate (65 tons), boscalid (99 tons), dithianon (72 tons), captan (106 tons). A 67 68 recent study of apple orchards in 4 regions of France including the South of France, conducted during the 2016 69 and 2017 treatment seasons showed that the contamination of workers and seasonal workers per day was 70 approximately 5.50 mg captan and 3.33 mg dithianon for operators, 24.39 mg captan and 1.84 mg dithianon for 71 re-entry workers, and 5.82 mg captan and 0.74 mg dithianon for harvesters (Bureau et al., 2021). One criticism of 72 this study is that only captan and dithianon were used as exposure markers, but pesticides are known to be present 73 in apples from southern France. These data as well as data on residues found by our partners on apple fruits and 74 leaves (data not presented) led us to test concentrations of pesticides ranging from 0.01 to 10 μ mol.L⁻¹. Our study 75 seeks to understand how certain pesticides used on apple trees in the South of France, present in apples and 76 therefore potentially ingested by consumers, can impact the immune system by deregulating the functions of 77 macrophage, key cells of the immune system. The immunomodulatory effects of pesticides such as captan, 78 boscalid, dithianon, and thiacloprid are poorly known. We studied the cytotoxicity of the different pesticides at 79 different doses and their effects on cytokine expression in hMDMs stimulated or not with LPS to evaluate the 80 impact of the tested products on the capacity of macrophages to produce cytokines in normal or inflammatory 81 conditions. Finally, we measured the oxidative stress of these cells by studying their ROS production. The study 82 of mRNA expression levels of oxidative stress genes in hMDMs after exposure to these pesticides allowed us to 83 assess the impact of these xenobiotics on the activation of antioxidant mechanisms by pesticides. The aim of this 84 study is to better evaluate the immunotoxic risk induced by the different chemical classes of pesticides that can be 85 found in fruit arboriculture.

86 **Table 1**

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)
	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	

88 NS: non-systemic action; S: systemic action

89 2. Materials and methods

90 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.

97 2.2. Isolation of human monocyte-derived macrophages (hMDMs)

98 Primary human monocytes were obtained from healthy blood donors (EFS - Etablissement français du sang, 99 Toulouse, France) and purified by a density gradient centrifugation method on Lymphoprep (Abcys) as described 100 by Martin-Blondel et al. (2009). Written informed consent was obtained from donors under EFS contract 101 n°21PLER2017-0002. In accordance with Articles L1243-4 and R1243-61 of the Public Health Code, the contract 102 was approved by the French Ministry of Science and Technology. The blood was screened for possible infections: 103 HIV (AIDS), HBV/HCV (Hepatitis B and C), HTLV (Leukemia/Lymphoma) and Treponema Pallidum (Syphilis). 104 Peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMC) were isolated by Ficoll gradient. Monocytes were isolated from the 105 PBMC by adherence to plastic plates for 2 h in a macrophage serum-free medium (M ϕ -SFM; Life technologies) at 37°C in a humidified atmosphere containing 5% CO2. After 2 h, the plates were rinsed twice using Hank's 106 107 Balanced Salt Solution (HBSS, without calcium or magnesium) to remove nonadherent cells. The resulting adherent cells in the Mo-SFM medium were >85% monocytes. After 24 h of culture in Mo-SFM medium the 108 109 human monocytes were differentiated into human monocyte-derived macrophages (hMDMs), characterized by 110 decreased ROS production and myeloperoxidase activity. All protocols were performed on screened blood from 111 at least on 3 donors.

112 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 113 114 calculated according to: data on the amounts of pesticide residues found in apples, the CANEPA study (Bureau et 115 al., 2021), and the maximum residue limits (MRLs) and acceptable daily intakes (ADIs) published by the European 116 Food Safety Agency (EFSA) for the Joint Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations/World Health 117 Organization Meeting on Pesticide Residues (Lukowicz et al., 2018; European Food Safety et al., 2020; Smith et 118 al., 2020). Pesticides solutions (100 µmol.L⁻¹) were prepared in DMSO and stored at -20°C. Each aliquot was 119 thawed and used once only. The required dilutions were prepared immediately prior to use in the culture media so 120 that the DMSO level did not exceed a final concentration of 0.01%. This concentration of DMSO did not affect the 121 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 µmol.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 µmol.L⁻¹) or DMSO as vehicle control (0.01% v/v final concentration).

128 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, 129 130 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 1.5x10⁵ cells/well and treated for 24 h at 37°C with 5% CO₂, with either the presence 131 132 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 133 134 of cultured Mø-SFM, and the cells were incubated for another 2 h at 37°C. Absorbance at 570 nm was measured 135 using a microplate reader (EnVision Perkin Elmer). Percentage of cell viability was calculated using the formula 136 $[(At/A0) \times 100]$, where A0 = absorbance of cells treated with 0.01% DMSO medium, At = absorbance of cells 137 treated with various concentrations of the pesticides. Total cellular LDH was obtained by lysing cells with lysis 138 buffer solution for 45 min before measuring LDH activity. LDH in 50 µL culture medium or cell lysate samples 139 was measured using LDH cytotoxicity assay kit (Pierce) according to the manufacturer's instructions. The 140 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.

143 2.5. Assessment of oxidative hyperactivity

To evaluate the impact of pesticides on the nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate (NADPH) oxidase-144 dependent oxidative hyperactivity (NOX2) of hMDMs, monocytes plated in 96-well plates (1.5 x 10⁵ 145 monocytes/well) were cultured for 24 h with either the presence or absence of increasing concentrations of 146 147 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 148 149 the presence of 5-amino-2,3-dihydro-1,4-phthalazinedione (66 µmol.L⁻¹, luminol; Sigma-Aldrich) using a 150 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 151 macrophages, either with 12-O-tetradecanoylphorbol-13 acetate (TPA, 100 nmol.L⁻¹) or with unopsonized 152 zymosan (ZNO, 50 ng/well), a polysaccharide prepared from the cell wall of Saccharomyces cerevisiae. Statistical 153 analysis was performed using the area under the chemiluminescence curve expressed in counts per seconds. 154

155 2.6. Pro and anti-inflammatory cytokine measurements

Monocytes were plated in 48-well plate at $3x10^5$ 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-1 β , TNF- α , IL-10 (InvitrogenTM) as recommended by the manufacturer's protocol.

162 2.7. Analysis of antioxidant gene expression in macrophages

Monocytes plated in 48-well plates with $3x10^5$ 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

- 170 at 95°C, 10 seconds at 60°C, and 10 seconds at 72°C) on a LightCycler 480 system. Primers (at a final
- 171 concentration of $2 \mu \text{mol}.\text{L}^{-1}$) were designed with the software Primer 3 and are listed in table 2. *GAPDH* gene was
- 172 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.

174 Table 2

175 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
NQ01	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

176 2.8. Statistical analysis

177 Results are shown as means \pm standard errors of the means (SEM). Statistical differences between two groups 178 (treated and vehicle) were evaluated using one-way analysis of variance followed by Bonferroni's means multiple 179 comparison method. Differences were statistically accounted for when p<0.05. In the figures, the following 180 symbols are used: * p<0.05; ** p<0.01.

181 **3. Results**

182 *3.1. Effect of the pesticides on cytotoxicity in hMDMs*

183 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 184 185 into the culture medium, as shown in Fig. 1. Cell viability was measured after exposure to different concentrations 186 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 187 lysis assessed by analysis of LDH level in the culture medium for thiacloprid, thiophanate, and boscalid (between 188 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 189 or captan (10%) compared with the control group, and 22% after exposure to 10 µmol.L⁻¹ of dithianon. Cell 190 191 permeability assessed with alamarBlue shows that 20% of hMDMs show an increase in dye permeability after 192 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⁻¹ 193 194 ¹, increased dye permeability after exposure of hMDMs at 1 and 10 μ mol.L⁻¹ (Fig. 1).

195 *3.2. Effect of the pesticides on basal ROS production by hMDMs*

196 In response to an inflammatory signal, macrophages produce reactive oxygen species (ROS) via the activation 197 of a NADPH oxidase, NOX2. Macrophages controlled production of ROS (superoxide anion: O₂⁻, hydroxyl 198 radical: HO, hydrogen peroxide: H₂O₂) plays an essential role in the defense against pathogens. Conversely, an 199 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 200 201 with 1 µmol.L⁻¹ thiophanate increased ROS production. dithianon and captan significantly ROS production 202 especially in macrophages treated with 10 µmol.L⁻¹. Thiacloprid and boscalid did not alter hMDMs ROS 203 production.

204 3.3. Effect of the pesticides on TPA- or ZNO-induced ROS production

205 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 206 207 activates NOX2 through protein kinase C (PKC) mobilization. The ROS production triggered by ZNO is coupled 208 to the phagocytosis of the yeast walls by macrophages. Chlorpyrifos and thiophanate increased TPA-induced ROS 209 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 210 211 thiacloprid had no effect on TPA-induced ROS production. Interestingly, only chlorpyrifos, dithianon and captan 212 had an immunosuppressive effect on ZNO-induced ROS production. Chlorpyrifos decreased ZNO-induced ROS 213 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 214 215 ROS production at 1 and 10 μ mol.L⁻¹ (Fig. 3).

216 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 antiinflammatory 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. 223 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 µmol.L⁻ 224 ¹ for 24 h were stimulated by lipopolysaccharides (LPS) from *Escherichia coli* (10 ng.mL⁻¹) to induce the 225 226 production of pro-inflammatory cytokines such as IL-1 β , TNF- α . Fig. 4 shows that none of the pesticides studied 227 increased the ability of macrophages to produce IL-1 β , TNF- α pro-inflammatory cytokines. However, we observed 228 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. 229 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-230 231 α at 0.1 and 1 µmol.L⁻¹, whereas thiophanate, thiacloprid and boscalid had no effect on LPS-induced production 232 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 233 234 production of pro-inflammatory cytokines, increased IL-10 production at 0.01 µmol.L⁻¹ and 0.1 µmol.L⁻¹, 235 respectively. The figure 4 also shows that thiophanate had no effect on IL-10 production whereas dithianon and 236 captan inhibited this production at 1 and 10 μ mol.L⁻¹.

237 3.5. Effect of the pesticides on gene expression of molecules involved in the control of oxidative stress

238 In phagocytic cells such as macrophages, reactive oxygen species (ROS) are formed upon activation of NOX2 239 NADPH oxidase during the phagocytic process. In parallel, ROS are produced by the mitochondrial enzyme 240 complex of the respiratory chain and *via* other cytosolic sources or within different organelles. To protect the cells 241 from oxidative stress and maintain cell homeostasis, antioxidant enzymes such as heme oxygenase (HMOX1), 242 NADPH quinone 1 (NQO1), catalase and superoxide dismutase are generated. Since chlorpyrifos, dithianon and 243 captan induced or suppressed the dose-dependent production of ROS by hMDMs, we evaluated whether those 244 three pesticides modulated the expression of antioxidant genes. To achieve this, cells were exposed for 4 h to 245 pesticides at different doses and the expression levels of heme oxygenase (HMOX1), NADPH dehydrogenase 246 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 247 248 of hMDMs at 1 μ mol.L⁻¹ dithianon and captan increased the mRNA level of *HMOX1* and *NQO1* by more than 249 nine times. While captan had no effect on the expression of catalase and SOD2 mRNAs, dithianon, which weakly 250 induced CAT and SOD2 at a dose between 0.1 and 10 μ mol.L⁻¹.

251 **4. Discussion**

252 Macrophages can respond to various inflammatory stimuli, such as a bacterial and fungal infection, viruses, 253 and parasites by producing ROS and cytokines. ROS production through activation of phagocytic NADPH oxidase 254 (NOX2) is crucial in the defense against infectious diseases and is involved in inflammation and multiple signaling 255 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 $(1 \mu mol.L^{-1})$ and chlorpyrifos (0.01 256 257 μ mol.L⁻¹) significantly increased the basal production of ROS. This increase in ROS production by macrophages 258 was not accompanied by an increased production of TNF- α and IL-1 β inflammatory cytokines. These results 259 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-1 β production. Conversely, 260 261 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 10 262 μ mol.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 263 264 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-1 β and IL-10 at a dose of 10 μ mol.L⁻¹. At this dose, dithianon and 265 captan completely suppressed TPA-induced oxidative bursts while only dithianon also completely inhibited 266 267 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 268 269 (Fontayne et al., 2002; Makni-Maalej et al., 2013). Zymosan, a cell-wall preparation from Saccharomyces 270 *cerevisiae*, is mainly composed of β -glucans, α -mannans, chitin, proteins, and lipids (Dostert and Tschopp, 2007). 271 Dectin-1 is the most important receptor for β -glucans (Brown et al., 2002). In human monocytes, dectin-1 has been 272 identified as the major pattern recognition receptor (PRR) for zymosan-induced activation of NADPH oxidase and 273 ROS production, and PKC δ has been identified as an important signaling component downstream of dectin-1 274 (Elsori et al., 2011). However, zymosan activates respiratory burst in macrophages through other receptors such 275 as TLR2, and a collaboration has been established between dectin-1 and TLR2 (Gantner et al., 2003). NADPH 276 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 277 278 human polynuclear cells that PKCδ and other PKC isoforms would be involved in zymosan induced dectin-1 279 dependent NADPH oxidase activation by phosphorylating p47phox on Ser315 and Ser328. It has also been shown 280 that p38MAPKinase and MEK1/2 would be involved in NADPH oxidase activation by zymosan (Elsori et al., 281 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 282 inhibiting PKC-dependent and PKC-independent pathways such as p38MAPKinase and MEK1/2 involved 283 284 respectively in dectin-1 and TLR2-mediated zymosan signaling and NADPH oxidase activation process in 285 macrophages. Captan, which at 1 µmol.L⁻¹ inhibits TPA-induced ROS production without inhibiting zymosan-286 induced 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 287 signaling and NADPH oxidase activation (Fig. 6). Chlorpyrifos, at 10 µmol.L⁻¹, also slightly decreased the ROS 288 289 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. 290 Similar results were found for the pesticide ziram (Parny et al., 2021). At a dose of 0.01 µmol.L⁻¹, ziram induced 291 292 a slight increase in ROS production as well as an increase in phagocytosis towards unopsonized zymosan. These 293 results were correlated with a slight increase in the expression of the dectin-1 receptor, involved in zymosan 294 phagocytosis. This suggests that chlorpyrifos could, similarly, activate the expression of dectin-1 on the cell 295 surface, and thus induce ROS production at 0.01 µmol.L⁻¹. The effect of chlopyrifos on dectin-1 is not known, 296 further studies are therefore needed to assess the effect of chlorpyrifos on the polarization of human monocyte-297 derived macrophages.When macrophages engulf foreign agents such as microbes, and other particles and are 298 exposed to inflammatory stimuli, they secrete various cytokines depending on their polarization state. 299 Macrophages can adopt different polarization states determined by the multiple extrinsic and intrinsic factors of 300 their microenvironmentClassically activated macrophages (M1 polarization) have a pro-inflammatory and 301 tumoricidal phenotype. These macrophages release pro-inflammatory cytokines such as TNF- α and IL-1 β (Arango 302 Duque and Descoteaux, 2014). The many subtypes of alternately activated macrophages (M2 polarization) can be 303 induced depending on the intrinsic and extrinsic factors to which they are subjected. Thus, depending on the nature 304 and type of stimulus, these macrophages express different levels of anti-inflammatory cytokines such as IL-10 and 305 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 306 307 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-1 β) in 308 309 response to LPS. Our results show that under our experimental conditions, macrophages derived from human 310 monocytes produced more TNF- α and IL-1 β and less IL-10 in response to LPS treatment. Based on the type of

311	macrophage response to LPS after exposure to pesticides compared to the control group, the pesticides used in this
312	study can be classified into three groups. The first group, thiophanate, boscalid and thiacloprid, did not affect the
313	ability of macrophages to produce TNF- α , IL-1 β and IL-10 in response to LPS and thus did not modify the initial
314	polarization of macrophages. The second group, chlorpyrifos, had a biphasic effect on the production of
315	inflammatory cytokines TNF- α and IL-1 β : significant dose-dependent inhibition at 0.01 and 0.1 μ mol.L ⁻¹ , and no
316	effect at 1 and 10 μ mol.L ⁻¹ , and no effect on the production of IL-10. The third group, captan and dithianon strongly
317	inhibited the production of TNF- α and IL-1 β at 10 μ mol.L ⁻¹ and also inhibited the secretion of IL-10 by 50%.
318	Dithianon also inhibited the production of TNF- α and IL-1 β at 1 μ mol.L ⁻¹ without affecting the membrane integrity
319	of the cells. Finally, considering the TNF- α / IL-1 β ratio versus IL-10, we have shown that these two pesticides
320	decrease the inflammatory response of macrophages to LPS without increasing the production of IL-10. Other
321	studies have shown that exposure of murine macrophage or human macrophage-like cells to chlorpyrifos or
322	methyl-thiophanate can modulate the production of inflammatory cytokines TNF- α and / or IL-1 β induced by
323	LPS. Regarding chlorpyrifos, Helali et al. have shown an inhibition of LPS-induced TNF- α and IL-1 β productions
324	by mouse peritoneal macrophages in a dose-dependent manner between 0.01 and 10 μ mol.L ⁻¹ (Helali et al., 2016).
325	Unlike these results, we report for human monocytes after LPS activation an inhibition of TNF-a release (only at
326	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)
327	for TNF- α and the concentration of 10 μ mol.L ⁻¹ for IL-1 β had no inhibitory effect. Recently, it was shown that
328	high concentration methyl-thiophanate (290 μ mol.L ⁻¹ /100 μ g.mL ⁻¹) increased the production of IL-1 β , TNF- α pro-
329	inflammatory cytokines, and inhibited the production of the IL-10 anti-inflammatory cytokine by the murine
330	macrophage cell line, RAW 264.7 (Weis et al., 2019). Under our experimental conditions, methyl-thiophanate in
331	the dose range studied, 0.01 to 10 µmol.L ⁻¹ , had no effect on the production of these cytokines by human
332	macrophages. Several studies have also established that exposure to pesticides could induce oxidative damage in
333	humans (Sharma et al., 2013; Jablonska-Trypuc et al., 2017). This is the case for chlorpyrifos which induce
334	oxidative stress, <i>in vitro</i> , in neuronal cells (Xu et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2019) and zebrafish (Jin et al., 2015). When
335	cells are exposed to oxidative stress, a defense mechanism induces the expression and regulation of a number of
336	antioxidant enzymes to protect them from damage caused by free radicals. Many of these antioxidant enzymes,
337	e.g. as Heme oxygenase-1 (HMOX1), NADPH quinone oxidoreductase (NQO1) (Bellezza et al., 2018),
338	superoxide dismutase 2 (SOD2) (Dong et al., 2008; Sun et al., 2015) and catalase (Ishii et al., 2002), are under the
339	control of the transcription factor Nuclear factor erythroid 2-related factor 2 (Nrf2). The nuclear receptor PPARy
340	is also involved in the induction of superoxide dismutase and catalase, and peroxisome proliferator response

341 elements and Nrf2-antioxidant response elements coexist in the promoter region of these genes (Zhao et al., 2015). 342 Biochemical alterations, particularly in antioxidant enzymes have been reported in some pesticide-exposed 343 populations (Sharma et al., 2013). Studies have also shown that certain carbamates and organophosphates can alter 344 antioxidant index levels. It was shown that cartap (thiocarbamate) and malathion (organophosphate) were able to 345 increase the expression levels of SOD and CAT in Wistar rats (Gupta et al., 2020) while carbofuran (carbamate) 346 decreased the expression of these enzymes in the brains of rats (Jaiswal et al., 2016). In our experimental 347 conditions, we have shown that chlorpyrifos between 0.01 and 10 μ mol.L⁻¹ had no effect on the gene expression 348 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 349 350 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⁻¹ 351 352 could activate in vitro cell pyroptosis in human neuroblastoma SH-SY5Y cells and oxidative stress through down-353 regulation of the SIRT1 / PGC-1a / Nrf2 pathway (Zhao et al., 2019). In this study we also showed that captan 354 $(0.1 \text{ and } 1 \mu \text{mol}.\text{L}^{-1})$ and dithianon (between 0.01 and 1 μ mol.L⁻¹) increased mRNA levels of antioxidant enzymes, 355 NQO1 and HMOX1, which are known to be under the control of Nrf2-ARE signaling pathways. These results 356 suggest that low doses of these pesticides would trigger oxidative stress in macrophages and that adaptive 357 activation of the Nrf2 / ARE pathway would be insufficient (notably at 10 µmol.L⁻¹) to attenuate the oxidative 358 toxicity and the inhibition of macrophage functions like oxidative burst resulting in the release of reactive oxygen 359 and the production of inflammatory and anti-inflammatory cytokines in response to inflammatory or infectious 360 stimuli. In another study, we showed similar effects with a dithiocarbamate, ziram, which also inhibited at 10 μ mol.L⁻¹ the pro-inflammatory functions of hMDMs via zinc and its oxidative properties by polarizing the 361 macrophages towards an M2-type anti-inflammatory phenotype despite bacterial (LPS) or fungal (zymosan) 362 363 aggression (Parny et al., 2021).

364 5. Conclusion

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 μ mol.L⁻¹ and 2.5 to 11.2 μ mol.L⁻¹ respectively in workers (Bureau et al., 2021) and that some MLRs, such as dithianon can reach doses of 10 μ mol.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.

377 CRediT authorship contribution statement

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

383 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.

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603 FIGURE LEGENDS

- **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
- different concentrations (0.01, 0.1, 1 and 10 μ mol.L⁻¹) for 24 h. Cells treated with DMSO alone (0.01%) were used
- 607 as controls. The toxicity of each pesticide to hMDMs was measured by alamarBlue and LDH assay. The data were
- shown as the mean \pm SEM of three healthy triplicate donors. *p<0.05, **p<0.01 compared to cells treated with
- 609 DMSO alone (Bonferroni multiple comparison test).
- 610 Fig.2. Effect of pesticide exposure on the production of ROS by hMDMs
- 611 The cells were treated with each pesticide (chlorpyrifos, thiacloprid, thiophanate, boscalid, dithianon, captan) at
- 612 different concentrations $(0.01, 0.1, 1 \text{ and } 10 \,\mu\text{mol.L}^{-1})$ for 24 h. Cells treated with DMSO alone (0.01%) were used
- 613 as controls. The production of reactive oxygen species was determined by chemiluminescence as described in
- 614 "Materials and Methods". The data were shown as the mean ± SEM of three healthy donors made of triplicate.
- 615 *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
- 617 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
- 619 as controls. The production of reactive oxygen species was determined on cells stimulated with TPA or ZNO by
- 620 chemiluminescence as above. The data was shown as the mean ± SEM of three healthy donors made in triplicate.
- 621 *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-1β, TNF- α and IL-10 cytokine secretion by LPS- stimulated hMDMs
- 623 Monocytes were treated with each pesticide (chlorpyrifos, thiacloprid, thiophanate, boscalid, dithianon, captan) at
- different concentrations (0.01, 0.1, 1 and 10 μ mol.L⁻¹) for 24 h. To simplify the figure, only the 10 μ mol.L⁻¹ dose
- has been represented. Cells treated with DMSO alone (0.01%) were used as controls. The level of IL-1 β , TNF- α
- and IL-10 was measured in the culture medium by ELISA. To induce inflammation, after 24 h, LPS were added
- 627 to induce the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines such as IL-1 β and TNF- α . The data were shown as the
- 628 mean ± SEM of three healthy donors made in triplicate. *p<0.05, **p<0.01 compared to cells treated with DMSO
- 629 alone (Bonferroni multiple comparison test).

- Fig.5. Effect of chlorpyrifos, dithianon and captan on the expression of genes involved in the control of oxidativestress
- 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 µmol.L⁻¹) or with DMSO alone (0.01%) as control for 4 h. Gene
- 634 expression of the antioxidant enzymes (heme oxygenase (*HMOX1*), NADPH quinone dehydrogenase 1 (*NOO1*),
- 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.

chlorpyrifos

thiacloprid







captan



chlorpyrifos

thiacloprid















Chemiluminescence











