



MEMBRANOUS GLOMERULONEPHRITIS

Pierre RONCO
Inserm Unit 1155
and Division of Nephrology
Tenon hospital, Paris, France

Disclosure of Interests

- Alexion (research grant)
- Amgen (research grant)
- Roche (research grant)
- Amicus (consultancy)

KDIGO



KDIGO 2012: Indications of IS therapy

- We recommend that initial IS therapy be started only in patients with nephrotic syndrome AND one of the conditions below:
 - Ur protein > 4g/d AND remains at >50% basal value, AND does not show progressive decline during antiproteinuric therapy **during observation period > 6 months (1B)**
 - Severe, disabling, or life threatening symptoms related to nephrotic syndrome **(1C)**
 - Scr has risen by >30% within 6 to 12 months from the time of diagnosis (but eGFR > 25-30 ml/min/1.73m²) and this change is not explained by superimposed complications **(2C)**

KDIGO : Initial therapy of MN

- We recommend that initial therapy consist of a 6-month course of alternating monthly cycles of oral and i.v. corticosteroids, and oral alkylating agents **(1B)**
- We suggest using cyclophosphamide rather than chlorambucil for initial therapy **(2B)**
- We recommend that cyclosporine or tacrolimus be used for a period of at least 6 months in patients who choose not to receive the cyclical corticosteroid/alkylating-agent regimen or who have contraindications to this regimen

KDIGO : Research recommendations

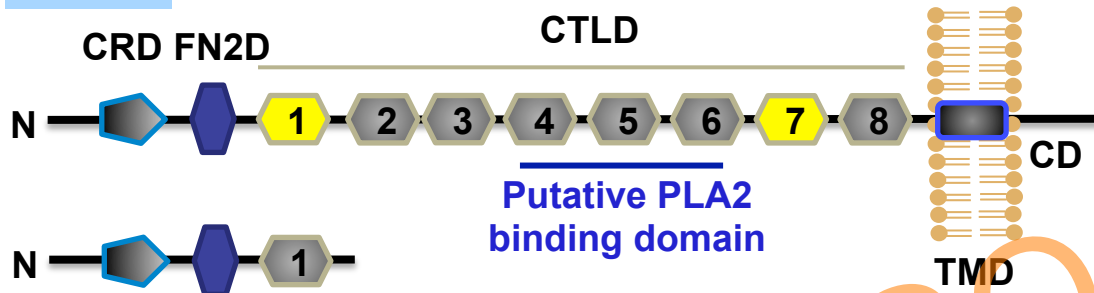
- Studies are needed to validate the **utility of anti-PLA2R antibody** in terms of its accuracy in separating primary from secondary MN
- Studies are needed to determine the most cost-effective panel of investigations for screening an **underlying (covert) malignancy** in the older patients with MN

Events since KDIGO 2012

- A wealth of studies on PLA2R
- Identification of THSD7A as a target
- Development of ELISA/IF tests (mostly EUROIMMUN)
- Two RCTs : GEMRITUX and MENTOR
- Retrospective comparisons of efficacy and safety (cyclophosphamide vs rituximab)

A paradigm shift in diagnostic, monitoring and classification of patients with MN

PLA2R



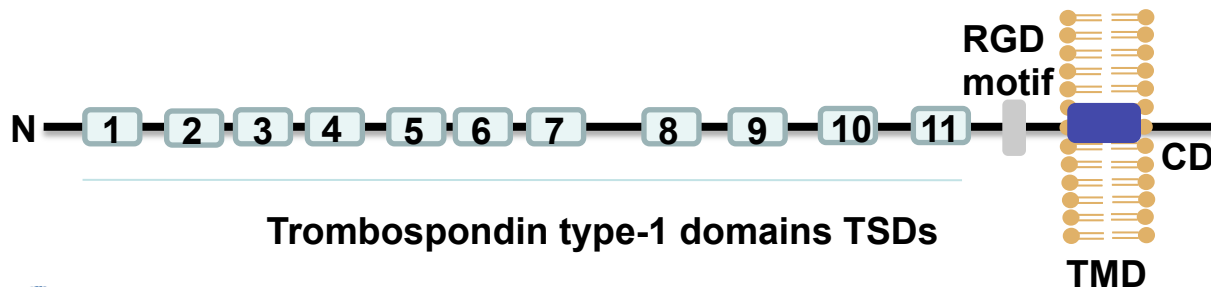
Beck et al, NEJM 2009,361:11
 Kao et al, JASN 2015,26:291
 Fresquet et al, JASN 2015,26:302
 Seitz et al, JASN 2016, 27:1517; JASN 2017 Nov 7th (epitope spreading correlated with outcome)

Conformational epitope is located in this region

 → 31 mer peptide from this domain

70% to 85% of adult MN patients

Thrombospondin type-1 domain containing 7A (THSD7A)

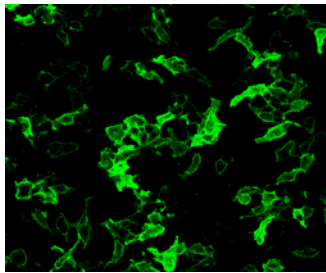


Tomas et al, NEJM 2014, 371: 2277
 Tomas et al, J Clin Invest 2016, 126:2519

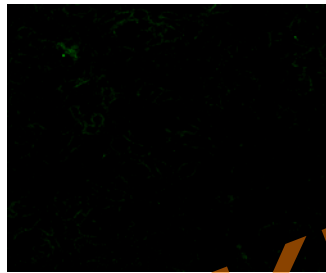
10 % of PLA2R-negative patients with MN

Serological tests for the diagnosis and monitoring of patients with MN

→ Indirect immunofluorescence for PLA2R and THSD7A →

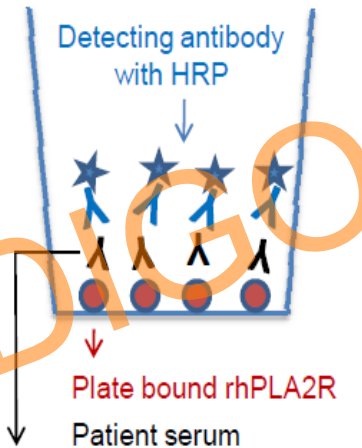


HEK293 cells transfected with cDNA for PLA2R



HEK293 cells non transfected

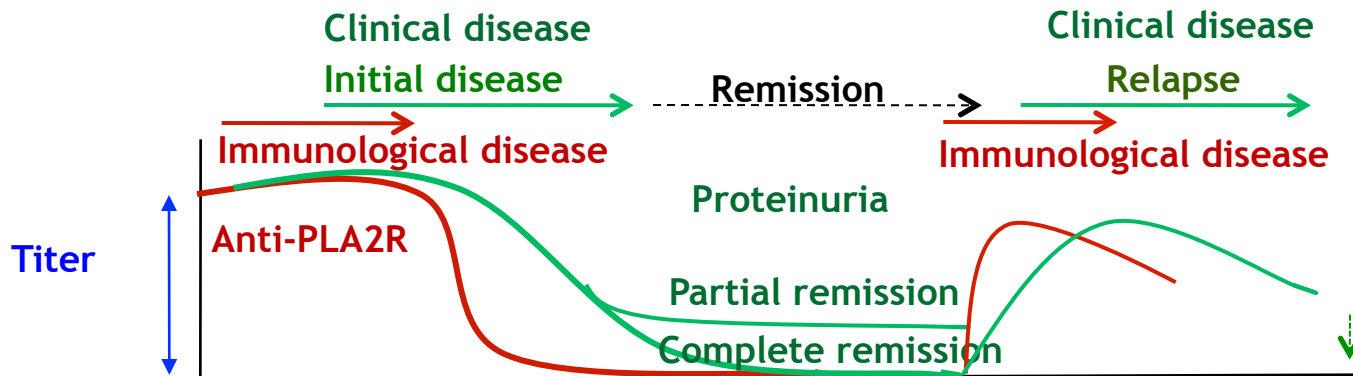
ELISA-PLA2R



Meta-analysis (2014)

- 15 studies, 2212 patients
- Specificity = 99%
(95% CI : 96-100%)
- Sensitivity = 78%
(95% CI : 66-87%)

Du et al, PLoSOne 2014, 9:e104936

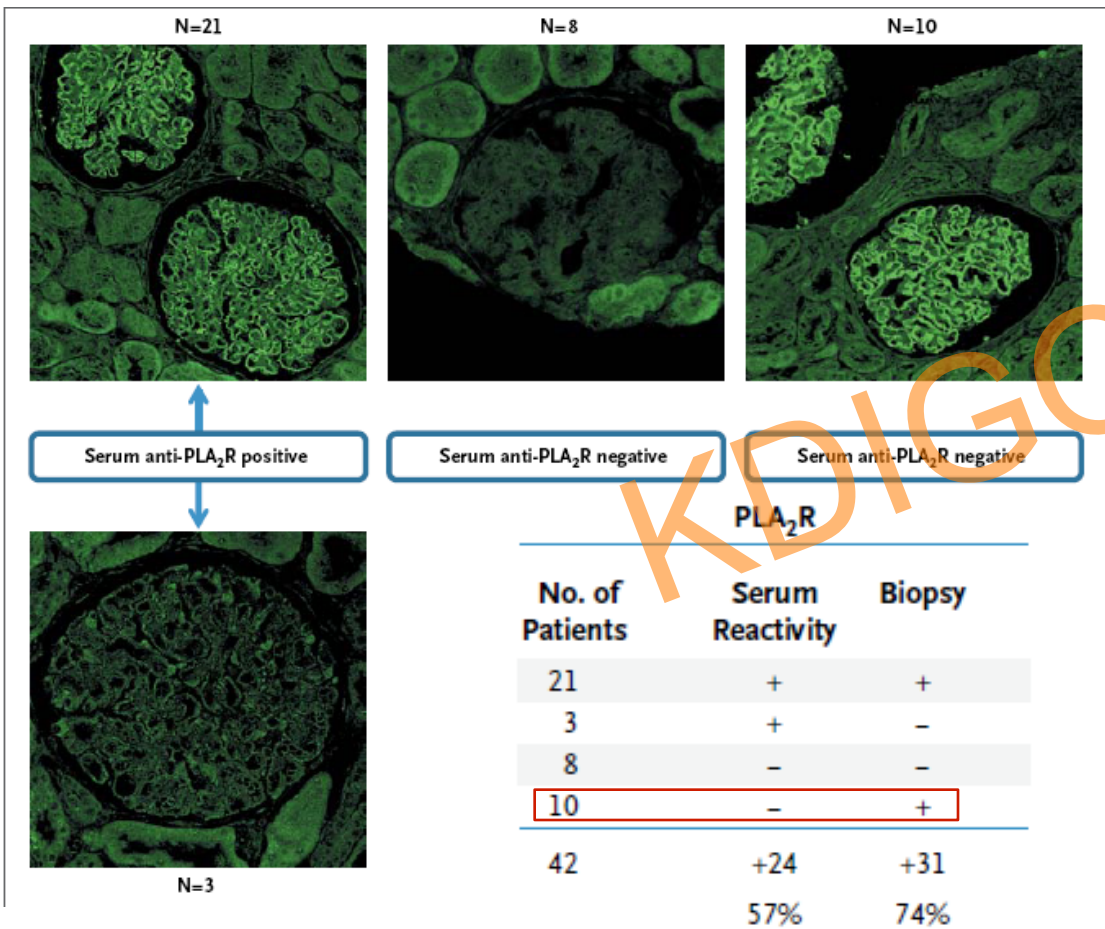


Recommendations for a good usage of serological tests for PLA2R

- IF : screening test (**more sensitive** than ELISA, depends on cut-off ++)
- ELISA : monitoring
- But IF positivity persists longer, hence **immunological remission** requires negative IF
- Both IF and ELISA may be negative because of sink effect or immunological remission before any treatment

👉 **search for antigen in kidney biopsy**

Antigen detection in biopsy is more sensitive than serology



Tenon cohort 2000-2014

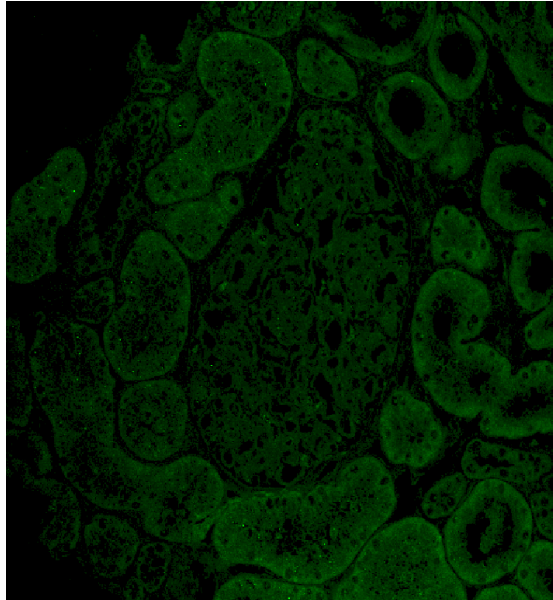
- n = 106 (84 IMN ; 22 sMN)
- sensitivity PLA2R - Ag : 86%
- " aPLA2R-Ab : 76%

Pourcine et al, [PLoS One](#). 2017 Mar 3;12(3)

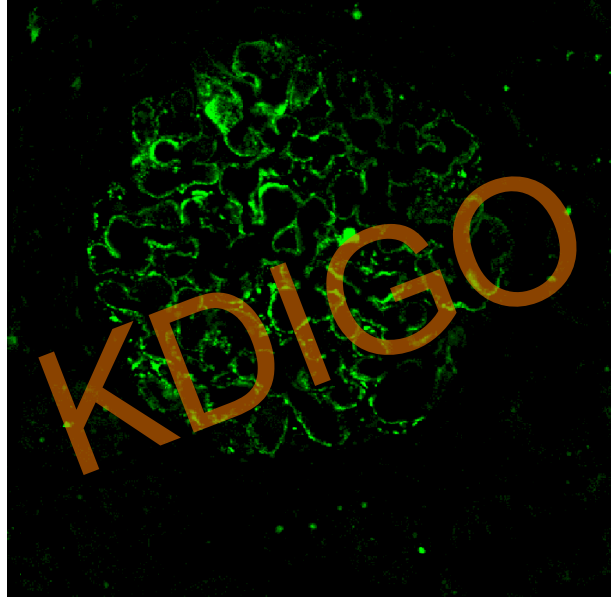
Retrospective diagnosis

Debiec and Ronco, *New Engl J Med*, 2011, 364 :689 ; Svobodova et al, *NDT*, 2013, 28:1839 ; Hofstra et al, *J Am Soc Nephrol*, 2012, 23:1735 ; Ruggenenti et al, *J Am Soc Nephrol*, 2015, March 24

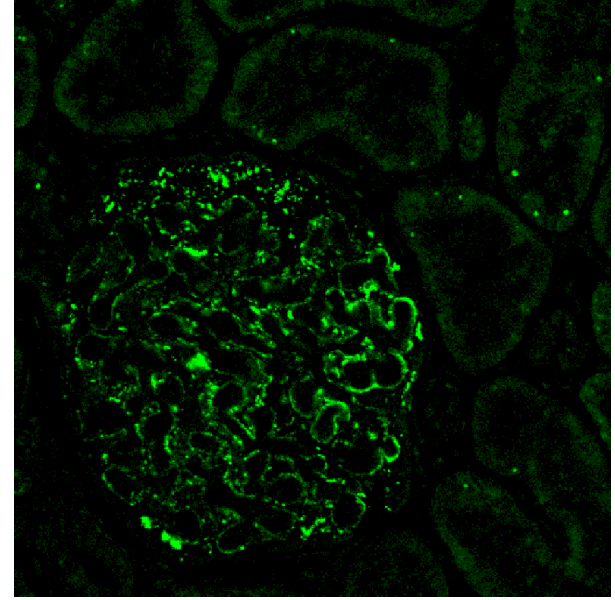
PLA2R antigen is not specific for primary MN



Lupus MN



**HepB (25/39)
Hep C**



Sarcoidosis

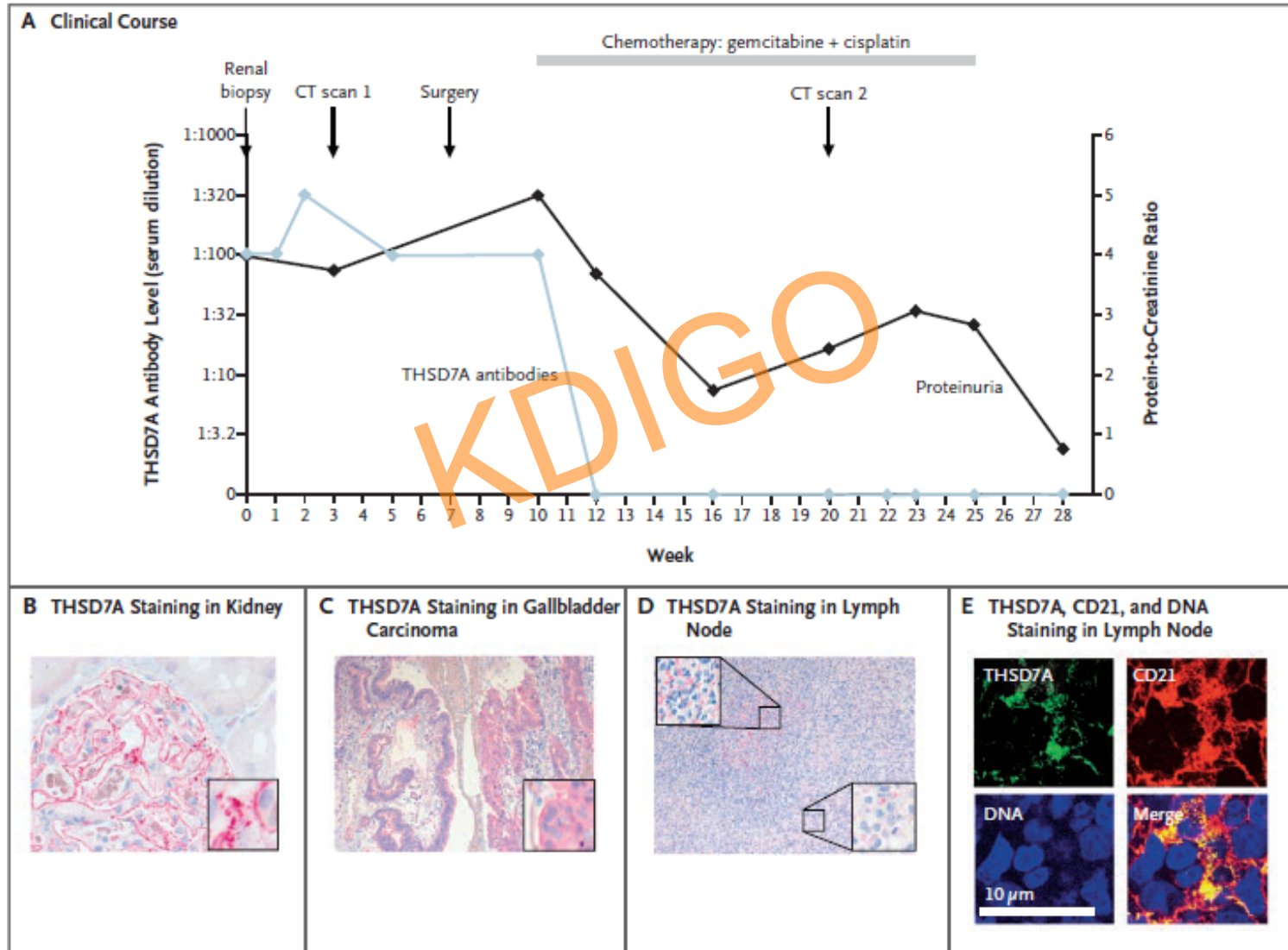
Coincidence of iMN with the associated disease ?

*Xie Q, Am J Nephrol 2015, 41:345 ; Stehlé T, NDT 2015, 30:1047 ;
Larsen, Modern Pathol 2013, 26: 709, Berchtold L, KI Reports, 2017, in press*

**The issue of cancer association
with MN is not solved**

KDIGO

A role for THSD7A in cancer-associated membranous nephropathy



Hoxha et al, NEJM 2016 374:1995

Prevalence of PLA2R and THSD7A-Ab in cancer patients

Hamburg/Boston series

Eight/40 patients with THSD7A-associated MN developed a malignancy within 3 months

Chinese series

44 K-associated MN

- 1 THSD7A-Ab + (2%)
Urinary bladder cancer > 7 years before MN

- 18 PLA2R-Ab + (41%)
Time interval < 6 months in 10/18 patients

*Wang, Cui, ..., Ronco, Zhao, Clin J Am Soc Nephrol. 2017 12:164 ;
Hoxha et al, JASN 2017, 28:520*

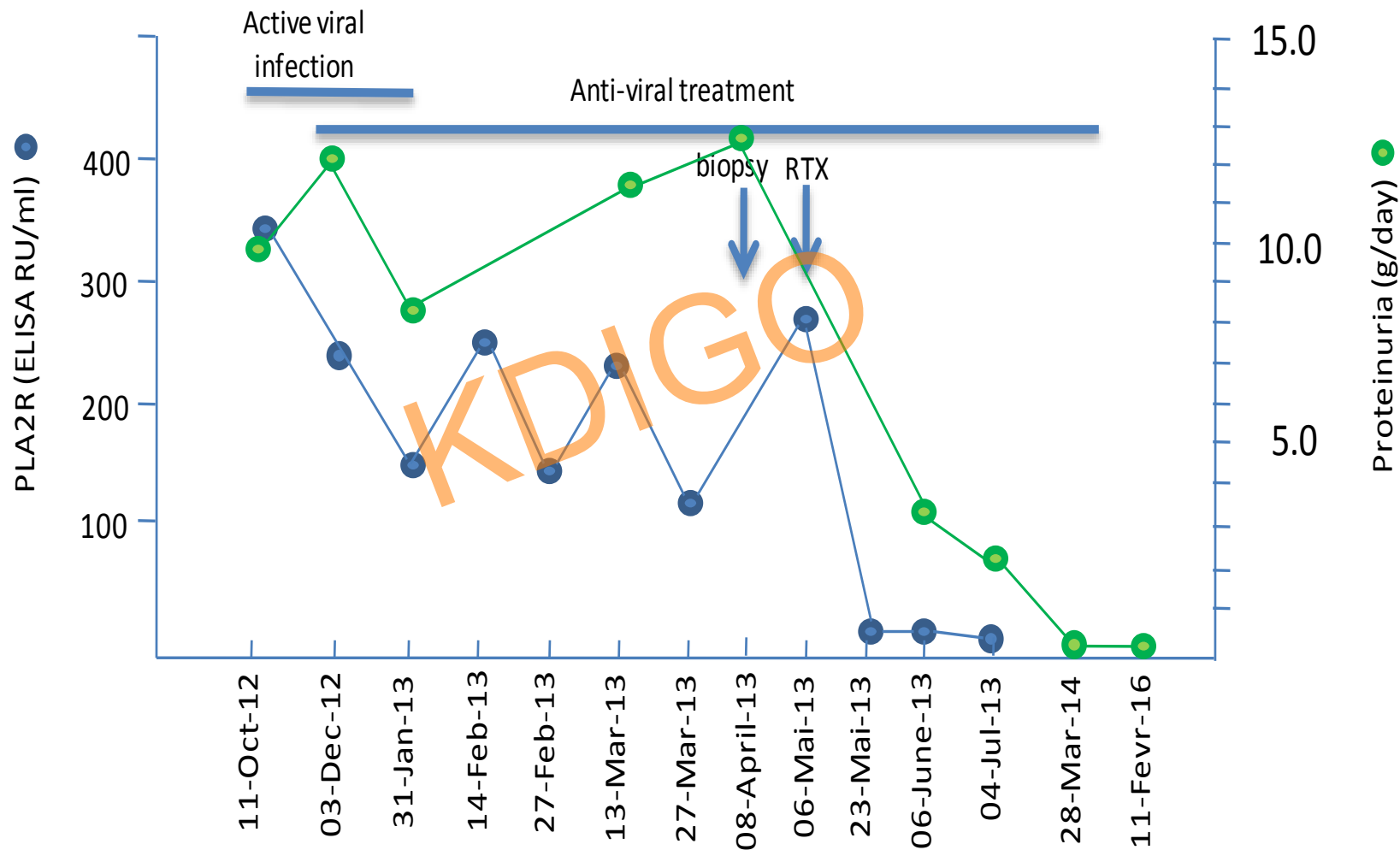


Toward a new serology/biopsy-based classification of MN

- PLA2R-related # 80 to 85%
- THSD7A-related <5%
- NonPLA2R-nonTHSD7A-related (third antigen) #10%
- Any of the above can be:
 - primary without known etiology
 - secondary: PLA2R-associated HepB, sarcoidosis
 THSD7A-(and PLA2R-) associated cancer

☞ Start with treatment of the suspected cause and shift to immunosuppressive therapy when needed

Specific treatment of (viral) cause may not cure secondary MN



Berchtold L et al, *Kidney Int Reports*, 2017, in press



Who and when to treat with immunosuppressive agents?

Can we shorten the 6-month « wait and see » period for patients at risk?

Is MN outcome still unpredictable ?

- Evolution follows the 3-third rule (spontaneous remission, ESKD, persisting proteinuria and altered renal function)
- Clinical predictors : age, gender, degree of proteinuria, kidney function at presentation, time-varying proteinuria
- Quality of remission: CR vs PR (elevated relapse rates, Thompson et al, JASN 2015, 26:2930)
- PLA2R (and THSD7A) antibodies

High levels of PLA2R-Ab are correlated with:

- A lower rate of remission, either spontaneous or induced by IS treatment
- A higher risk :
 - of occurrence of nephrotic syndrome in non-nephrotic patients
 - of renal function deterioration
- A longer time to remission under IS treatment

Kanigicherla D et al, Kidney Int 2013 83: 940 ;

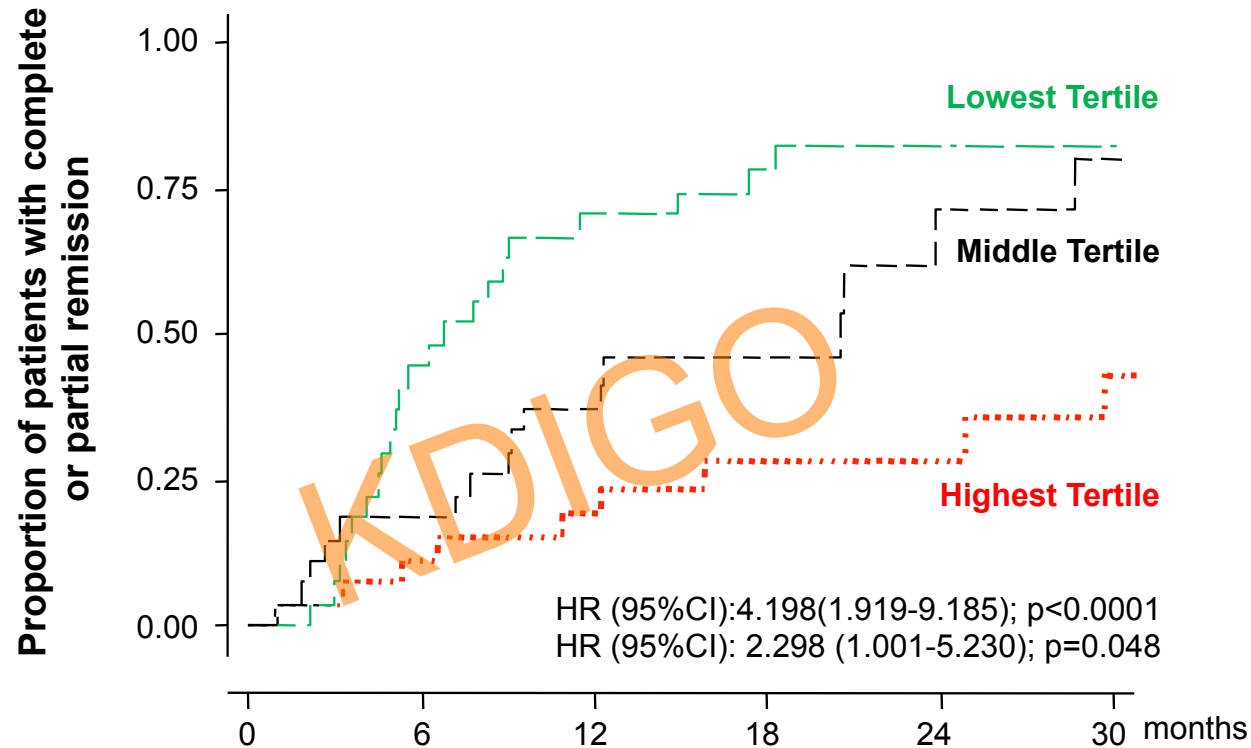
Hofstra JM et al, JASN 2012 23: 1735 ;

Hoxha E et al, JASN 2014 25:1357 ;

Ruggenenti P et al, JASN 2015 26:2545;

Hoxha E et al, PLoS One 2014 9:e110681

Proportion of PLA2R-positive patients with remission is strongly dependent on antibody titer



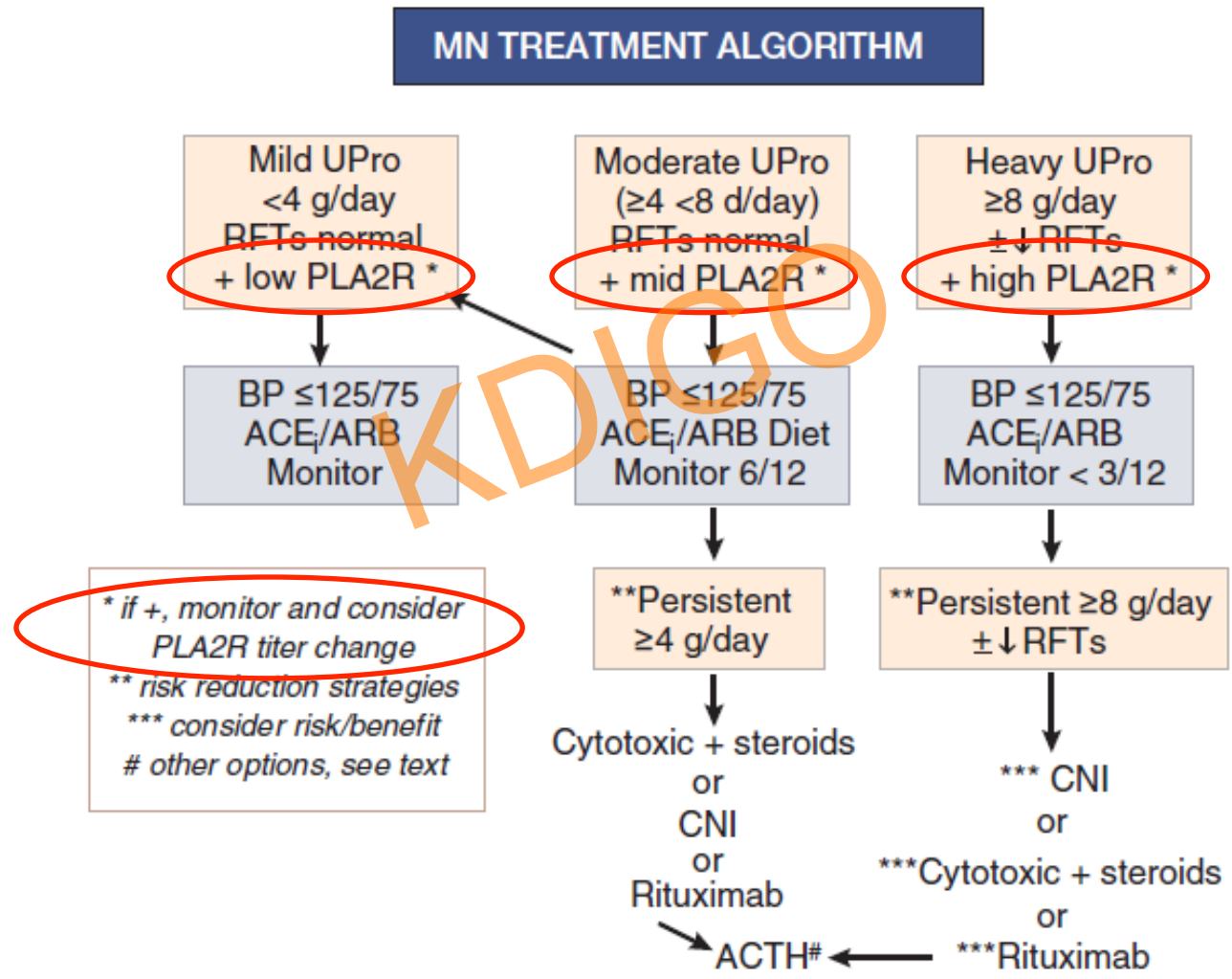
Patients at risk

Lowest Tertile	27	15	8	6	4	3
Middle Tertile	27	22	16	8	3	2
Highest Tertile	27	22	20	14	11	6

Revisiting algorithms for stratifying risks

KDIGO

MN treatment algorithm : The new approach

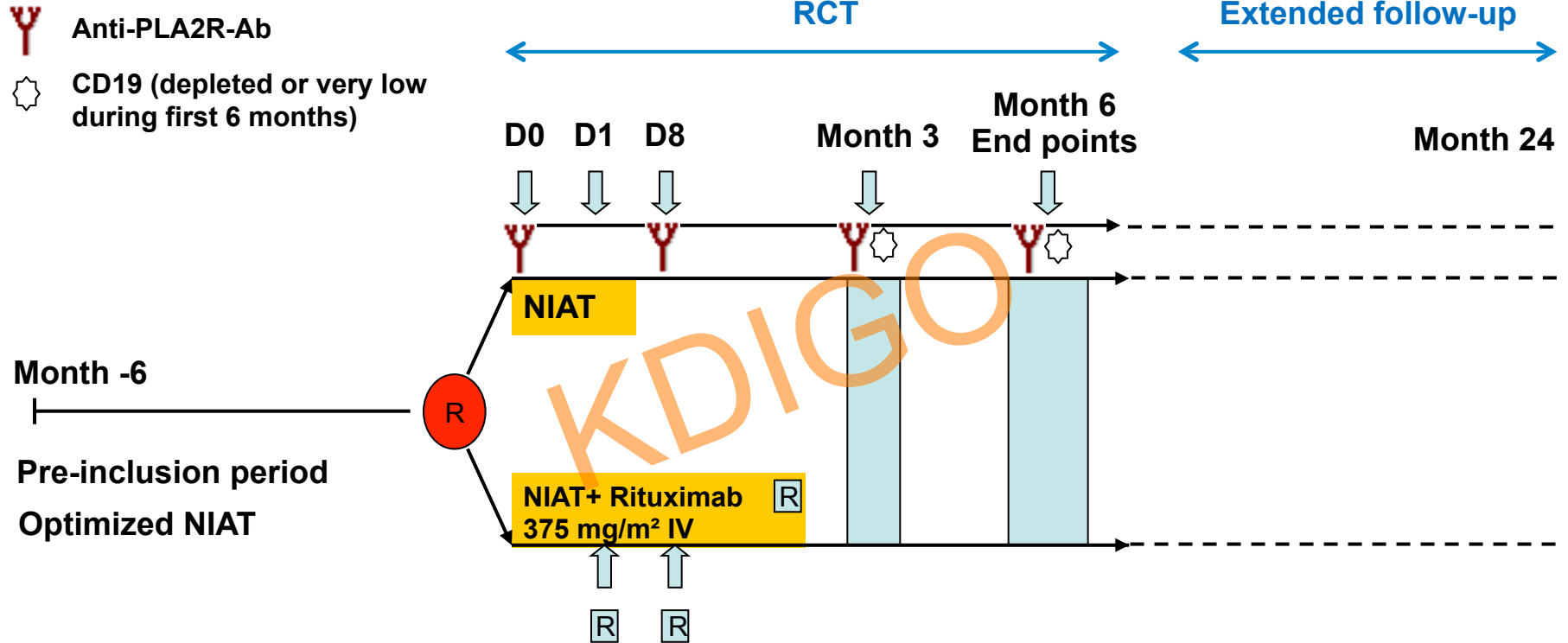


What should be the first line therapy ?

Efficacy vs safety: Is this still a timely question?

Time for a paradigm shift ?

GEMRITUX protocol: 80 patients



Inclusion criteria :

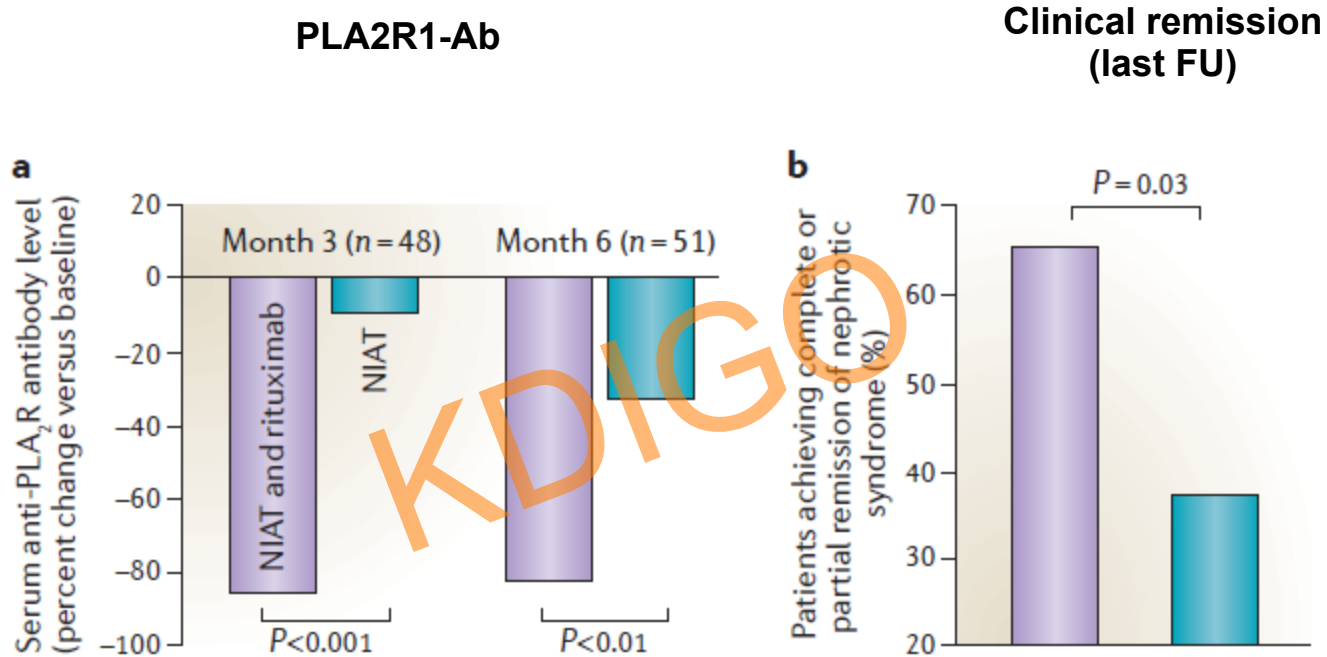
- > 18 yrs
- idiopathic MN
- **persisting NS after 6 months**
- eGFR > 30 ml/min/1.73m²
- 2 determinations of proteinuria

Exclusion criteria :

- secondary MN
- pregnancy/breast feeding
- IS in the last 3 months (4 pts>1 yr)
- active infection



Key findings from the GEMRITUX trial



Dahan et al, JASN 2017, 28;348

Drawn by Ruggenti et al, Nature Reviews 2017 July 3rd

Membranous Nephropathy

Rituximab

CsA

At 6 mo

At 6 mo

NR (<25%)

PR

CR

NR (<25%)

PR

CR

Failure

Retreat
at 6 mo

Observation

Failure

Continue Rx

Exit

Rx stops at 12 mo

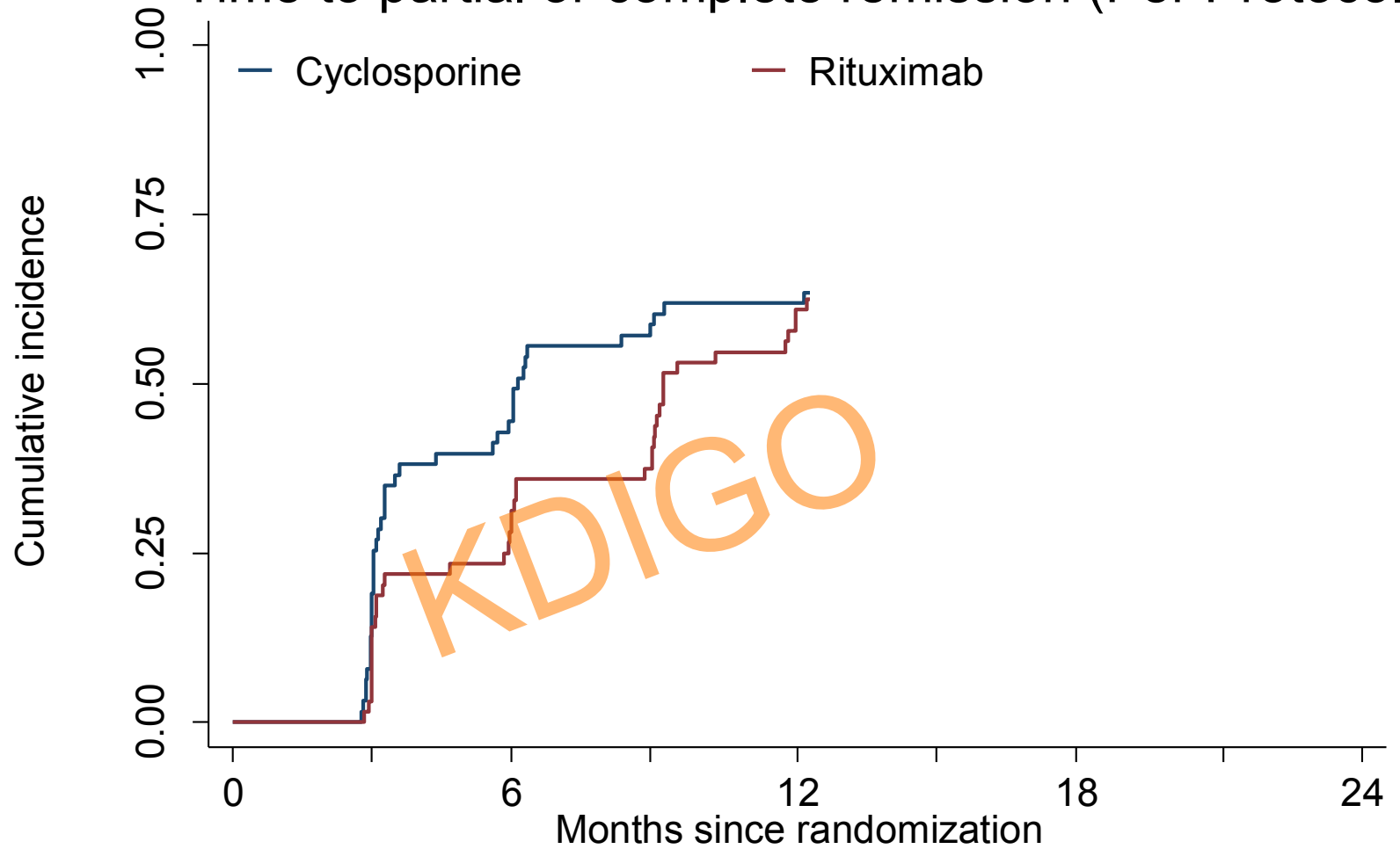
Observation for 12 months

Exit

Rx stops at 12 mo

Observation for 12 months

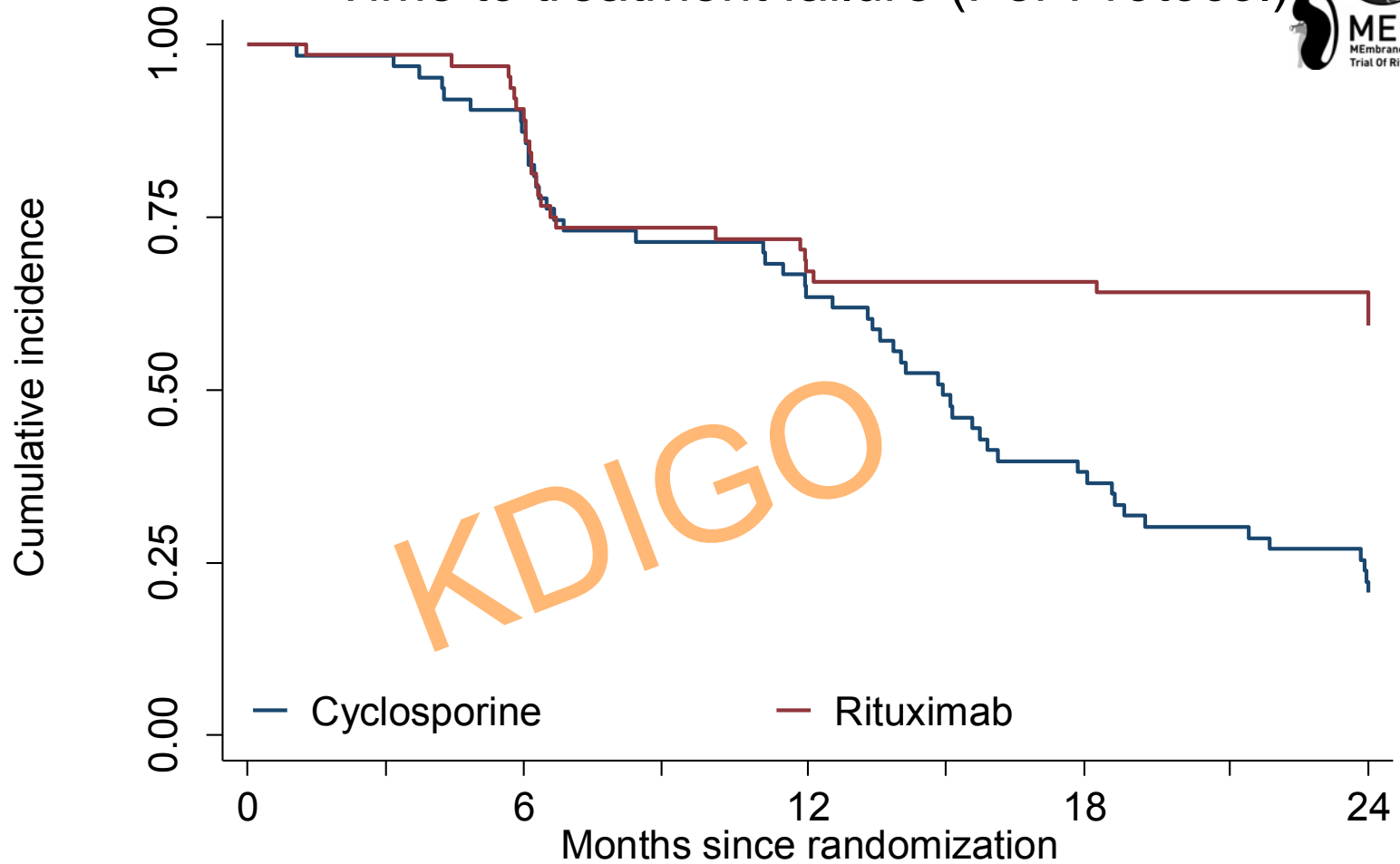
Time to partial or complete remission (Per Protocol)



Number at risk

Rituximab	64	46	25
Cyclosporine	63	35	24

Time to treatment failure (Per Protocol)



KDIGO

Number at risk

Rituximab	64	58	43	42	41
Cyclosporine	63	55	40	24	14

Analysis Per Protocol at 24 months

	CSA	RTX
Treatment failure	50 (79.4%)	24 (37.5%)
CR/PR	13 (20.6%)	40 (62.5%)

Strong evidence against the null hypothesis of inferiority (p-value <0.0001)

Risk Difference is 40.3% (95%CI 24.7% to 55.9%)

Odds Ratio is 6.0 (95%CI 2.7 to 13.2)

Analysis Per Protocol at 24 months (patients that were in C/PR at 12 months)

	CSA	RTX
Treatment failure	21 (63.6%)	1 (2.6%)
CR/PR	12 (36.4%)	37 (97.4%)

Strong evidence against the null hypothesis of inferiority (p-value <0.0001)

The estimated risk difference of being in remission between the RTX group and the Cyclosporine group is 43.856% (95% CI 28.409%, 59.302%)

The odds ratio of being in remission in the RTX group compared to the Cyclosporine group is 7.2065 (95% CI 3.1963, 16.2482)

Conclusion

- B cell targeting with Rituximab **is as effective as Cyclosporine** in inducing C/PR of proteinuria during active treatment phase
- B cell targeting with Rituximab **is non-inferior to Cyclosporine** in inducing **long-term C or PR**
- B cell targeting with Rituximab **reduces the number of relapses and increases the time to relapse** when compared with Cyclosporine
- B cell targeting with Rituximab has a **better side effect profile**



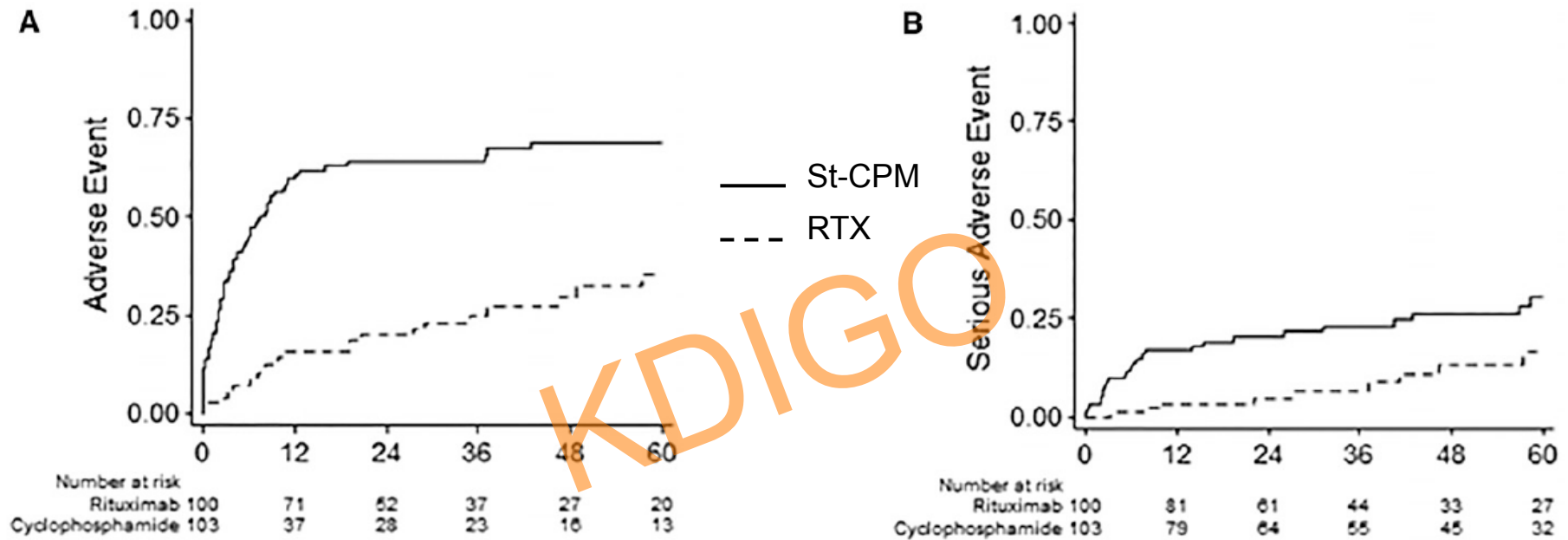
Have we made progress?

- Still 30 to 40% of patients do not achieve remission
- (Many) more partial remissions than complete ones
- Relapses more frequent in patients with partial remission
- Still severe adverse events, much less with rituximab

Toxicity is an important issue

- CPM gives a 3-fold increase in cancer risk, annually from 0.3 to 1.0% for the average patient (van den Brand et al, CJASN 2014, 9:1066)
- In a comparison between CPM (n=103) and RTX (n=100) with a FU of 40 months, the RTX group had less adverse events (63 vs173), both serious (11vs46) and nonserious (52 vs127), (van den Brand.....Remuzzi, JASN 2017, on line)
- However CPM protocols differ between:
 - Claudio Ponticelli (6 months, alternative therapy, 2.5 mg/kg)
 - Jack Wetzels (6 to12 months, continuous therapy,1.5 mg/kg)

Comparison of safety and efficacy of RTX vs Steroids and Cyclophosphamide



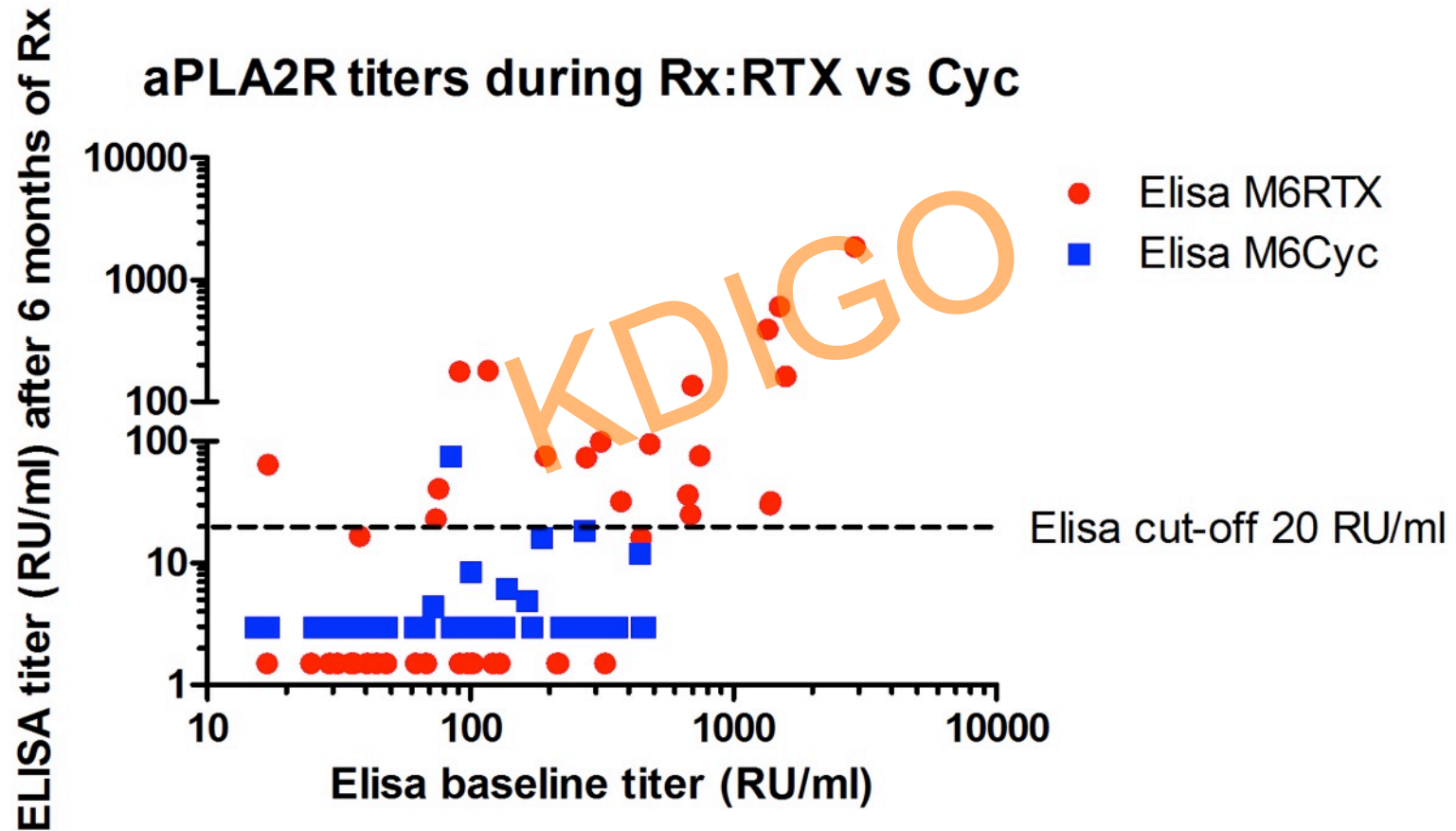
Rates	RTX	St-CPM	P
PR	70.6%	94.8%	0.01
CR	40.3%	41.5%	0.95

Immunological remission in PLA2R-Ab associated MN Steroids-CPM versus RTX (375 mg/m², D1, D7)



van de Logt et al, ASN Renal Week 2017

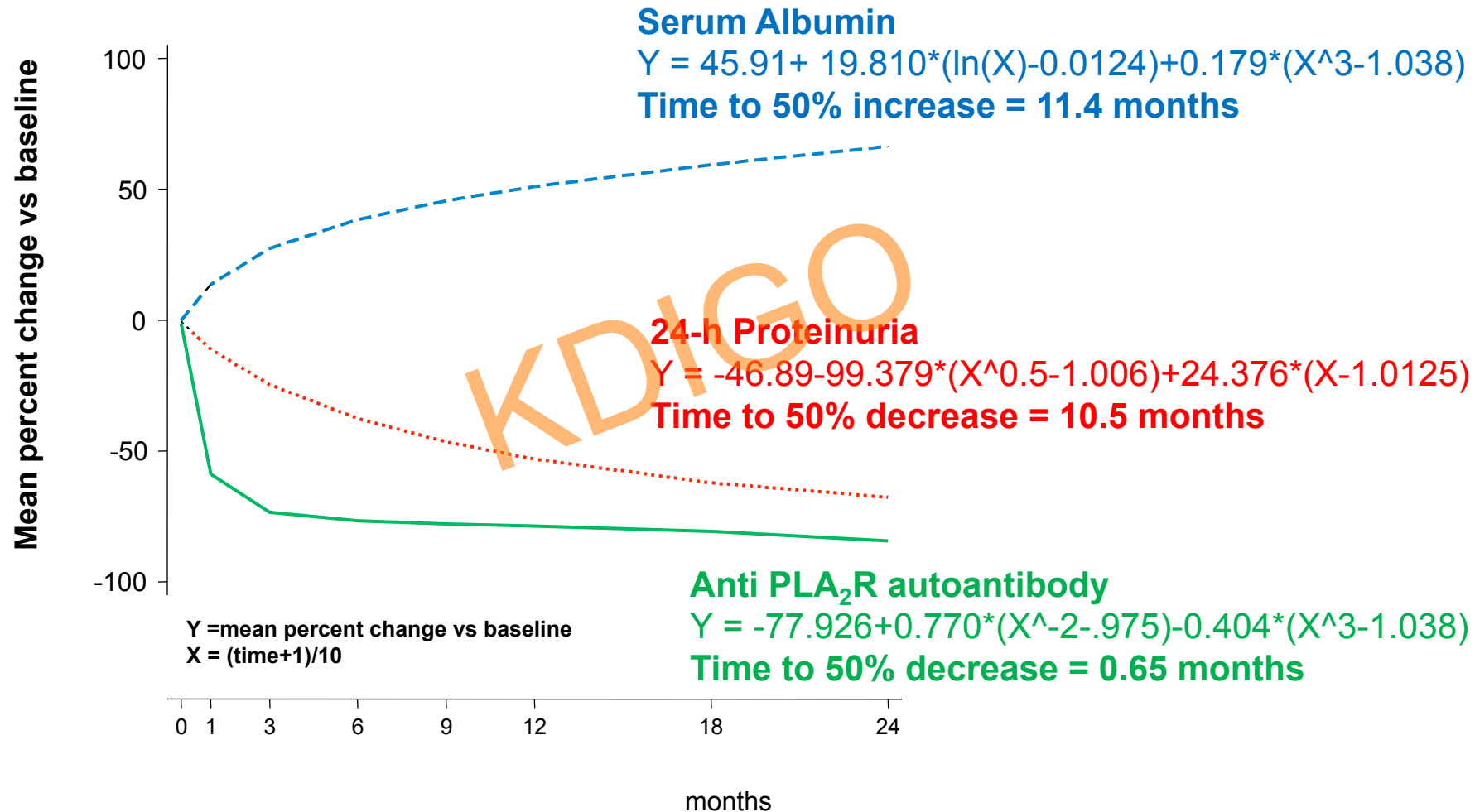
Rituximab less effective at the used dose (375 mg/m², D1, D7) in reducing aPLA2R after 6 months



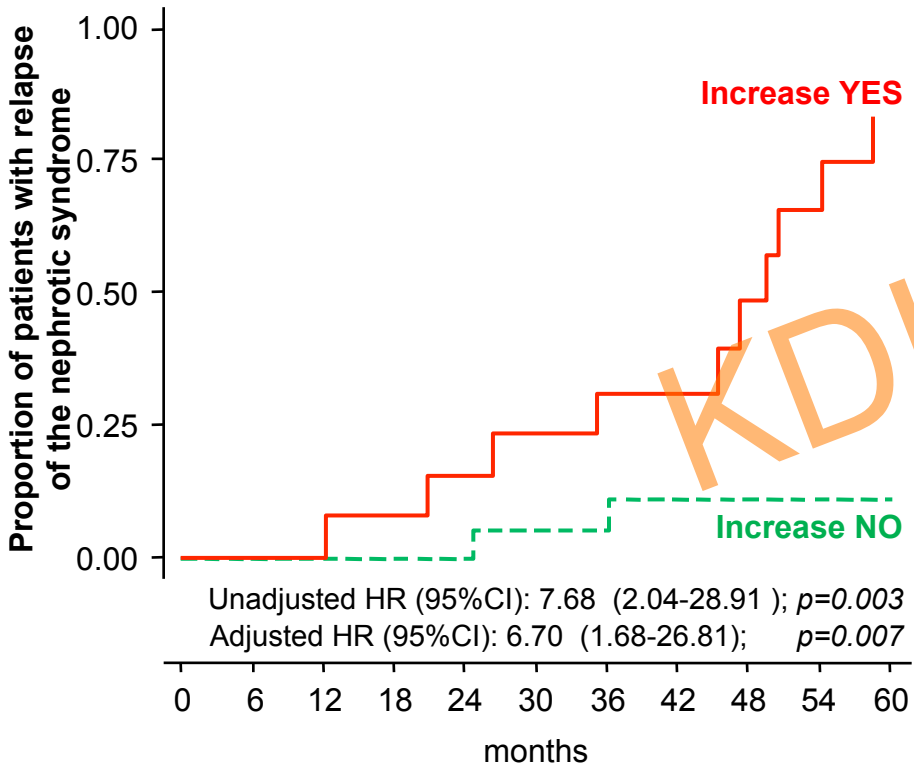
van de Logt et al, ASN Renal Week 2017

How to monitor and predict clinical response and relapse?

PLA2R-Ab decrease precedes improvement of clinical parameters

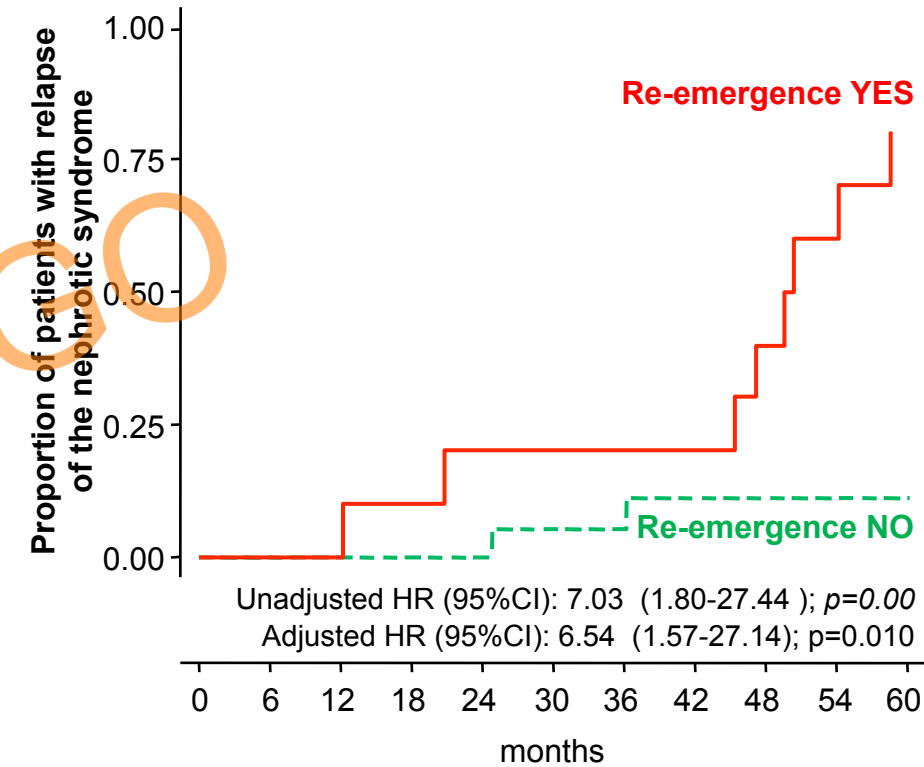


PLA2R Ab titer increase or antibody re-emergence is associated with a high risk of relapse



Patients at risk

Increase NO	31	31	27	26	24	16	16	12	12	11	10
Increase YES	13	13	13	12	11	10	9	8	6	4	2

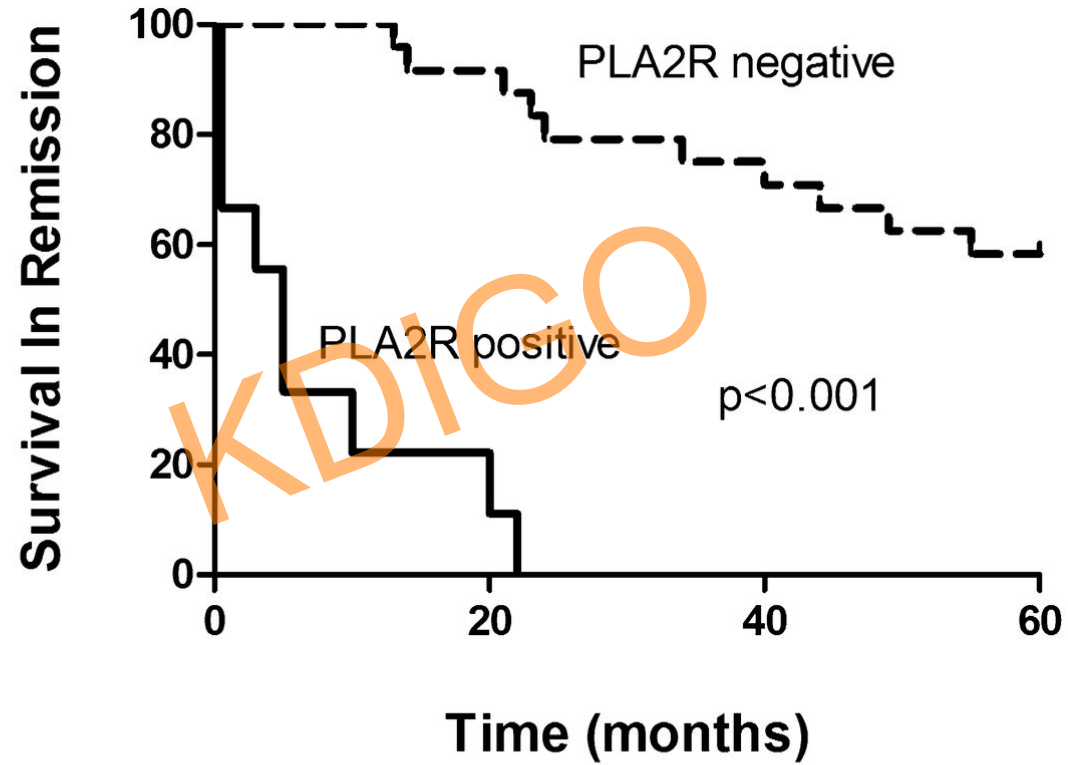


Patients at risk

Emergence NO	31	31	27	26	24	16	16	12	12	11	10
Emergence YES	10	10	10	9	8	8	8	8	6	4	2



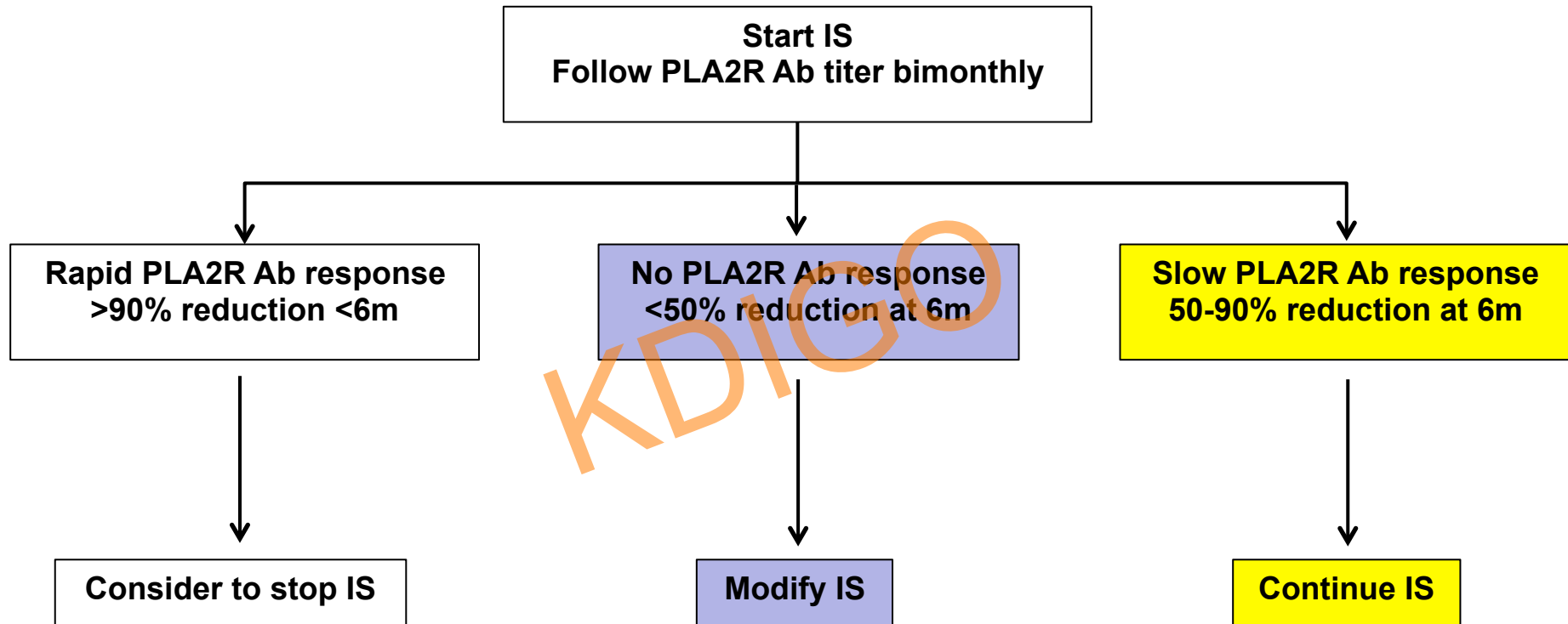
Anti-PLA2R antibodies predict relapse rate after IS therapy



PLA2R positive	9	2	0	0
PLA2R negative	24	22	18	14



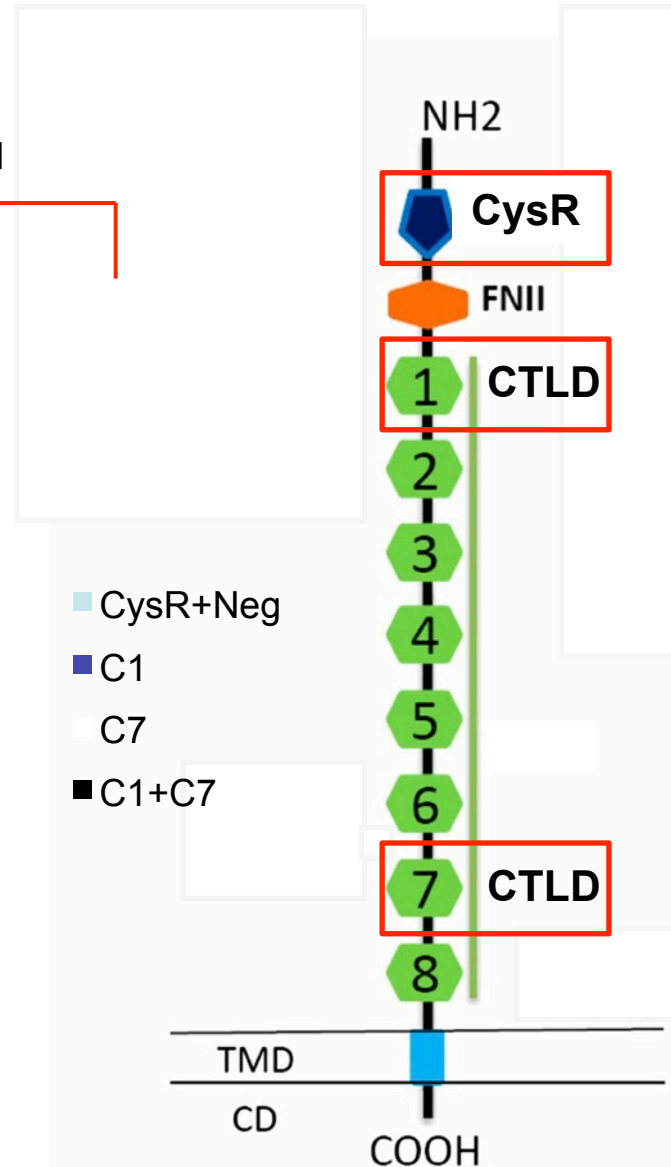
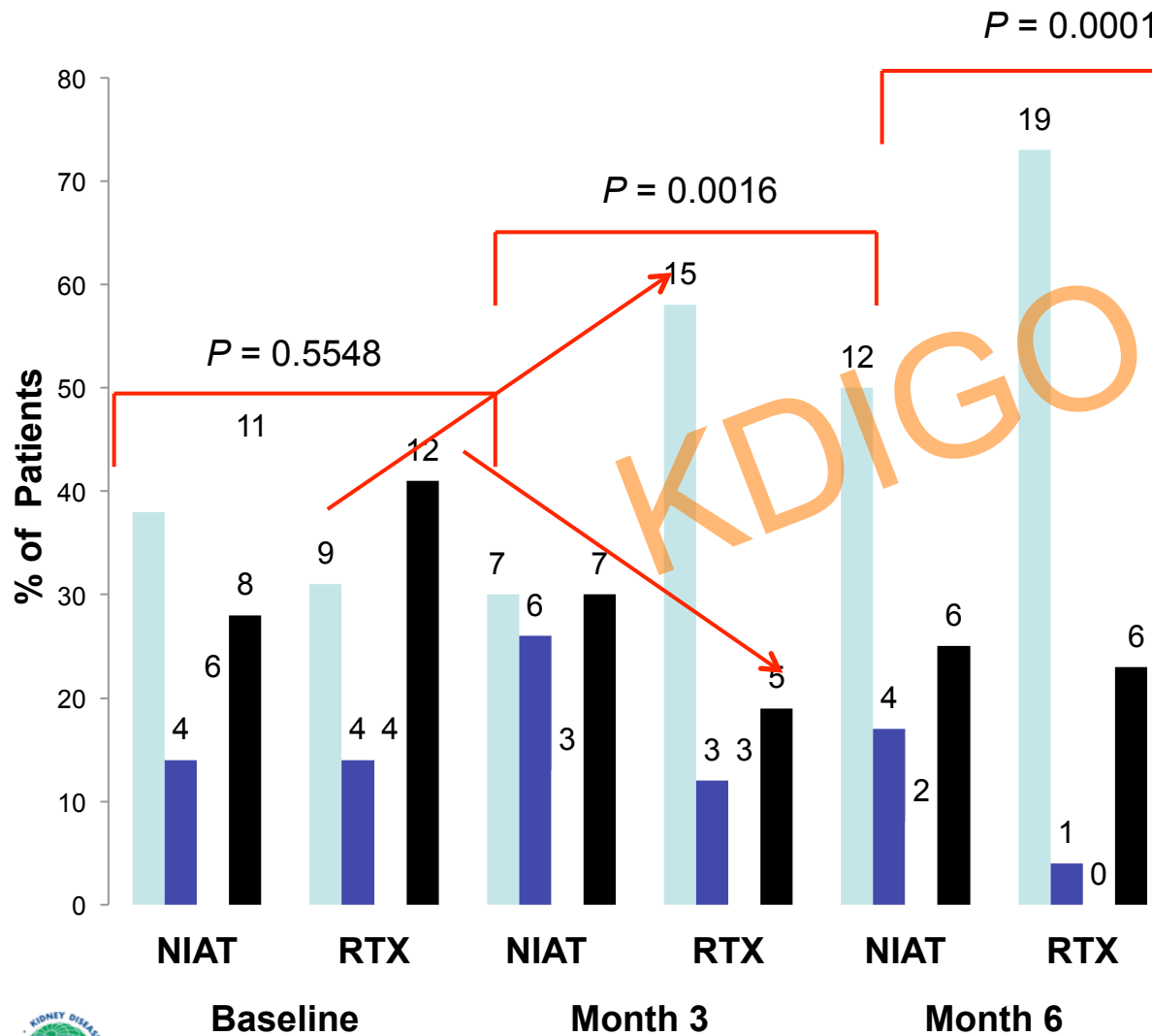
Therapeutic algorithm of membranous nephropathy : Look at kinetics of PLA2R-Ab!



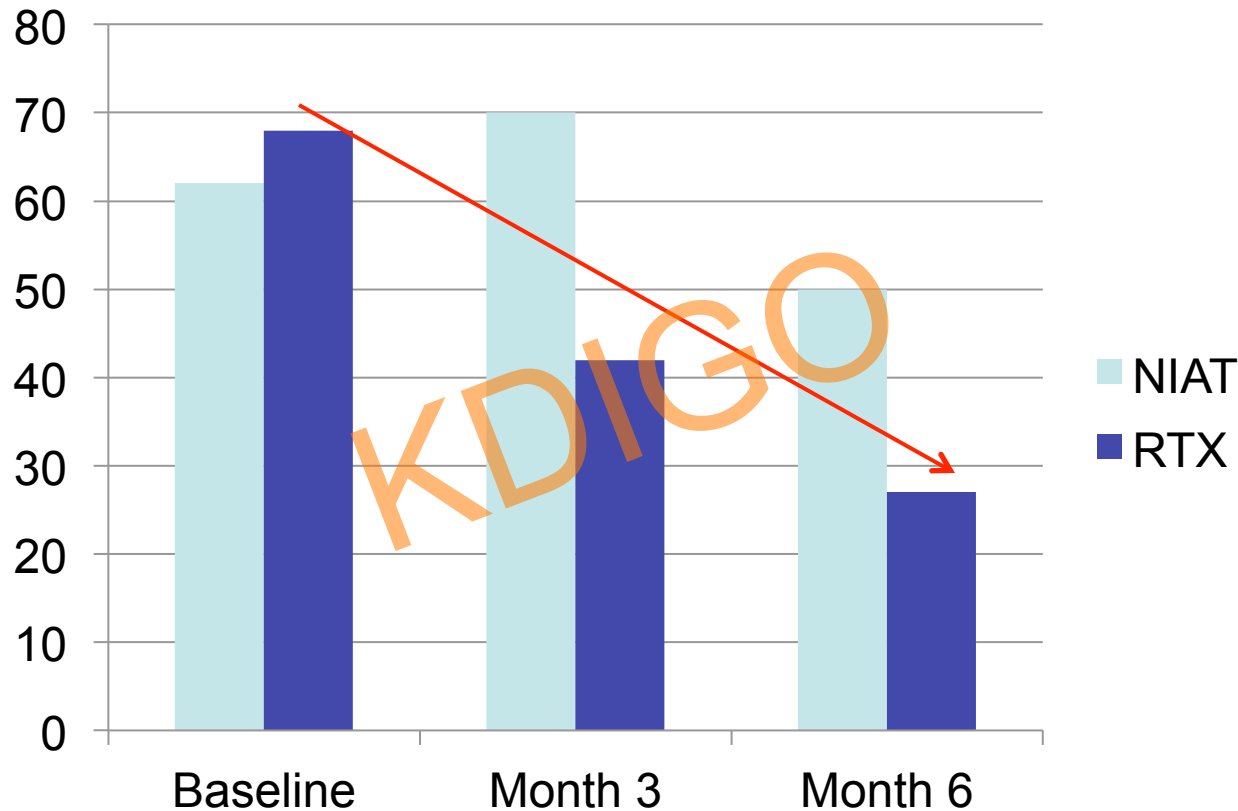
De Vriese et al, JASN 2017, 28:421 (Mayo Clinic, California)

Should we wait for 6 months in pts with persisting high titers of PLA2R-Ab (and Ab spreading) until reinforcing/changing/combining therapy? Or consider 3 months as the turning point (GEMRITUX)?

Effect of rituximab on epitope reactivity in the GEMRITUX cohort



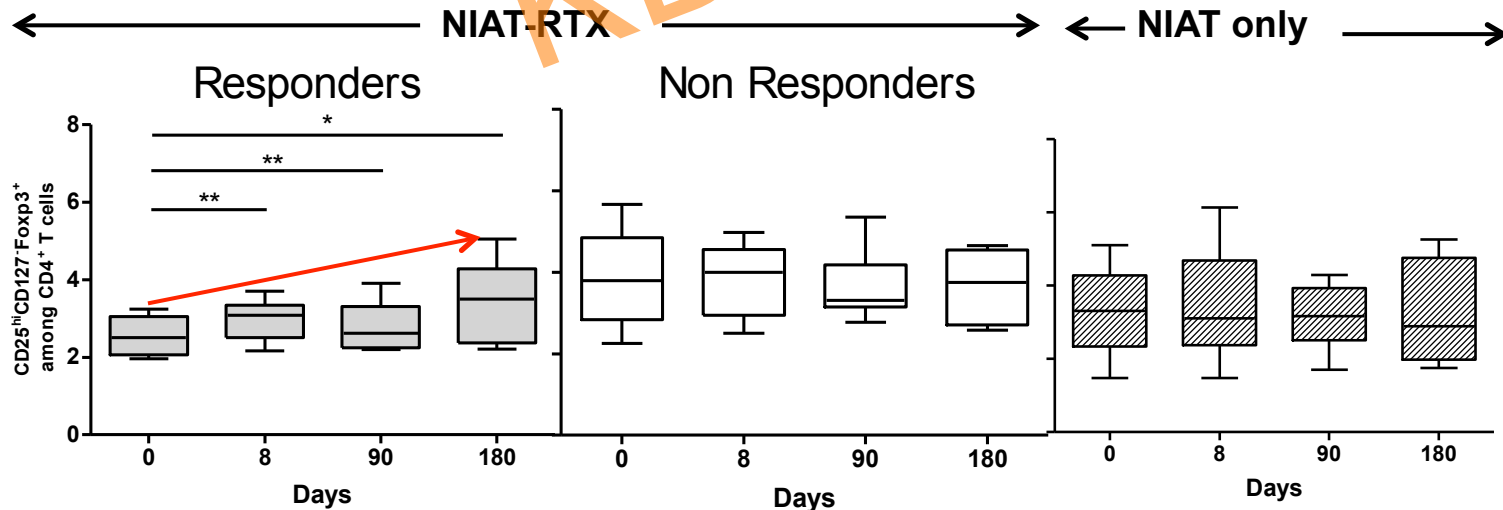
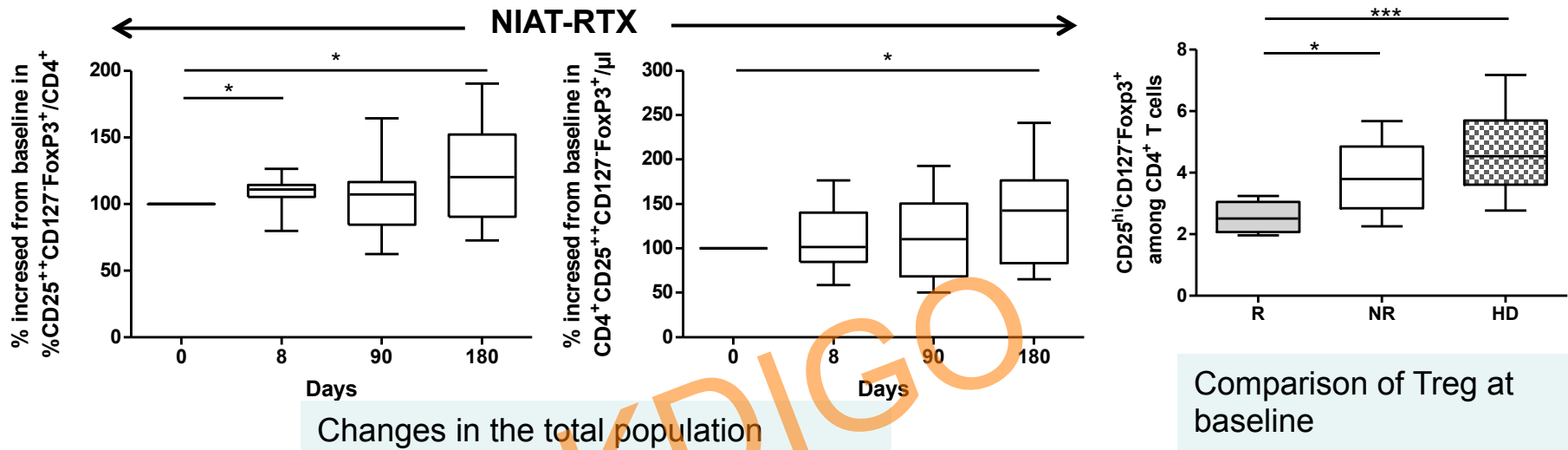
Outcome of spreading (CysR C1/C7) in the GEMRITUX cohort



Spreading at baseline is associated with a decreased rate of remission at 6 months (OR 0.16 , P= 0.02) and last follow-up (OR 0.14, P=0.01), **irrespective of PLA2R-Ab titer at baseline**



Changes in Treg in iMN patients treated with NIAT-Rituximab



Our today practice at Tenon Hospital

- Shorten the « wait and see » period to 3 months in patients with high-level PLA2R-Ab persisting at 3 months
- Start with rituximab (RTX) as first-line therapy
- Retreat patients (re-infuse RTX) on the basis of PLA2R-Ab level, not CD19 depletion
- Use combined therapy (Prograf-RTX) in « refractory » patients
- Consider epitope spreading (epitope-specific ELISAs soon available)

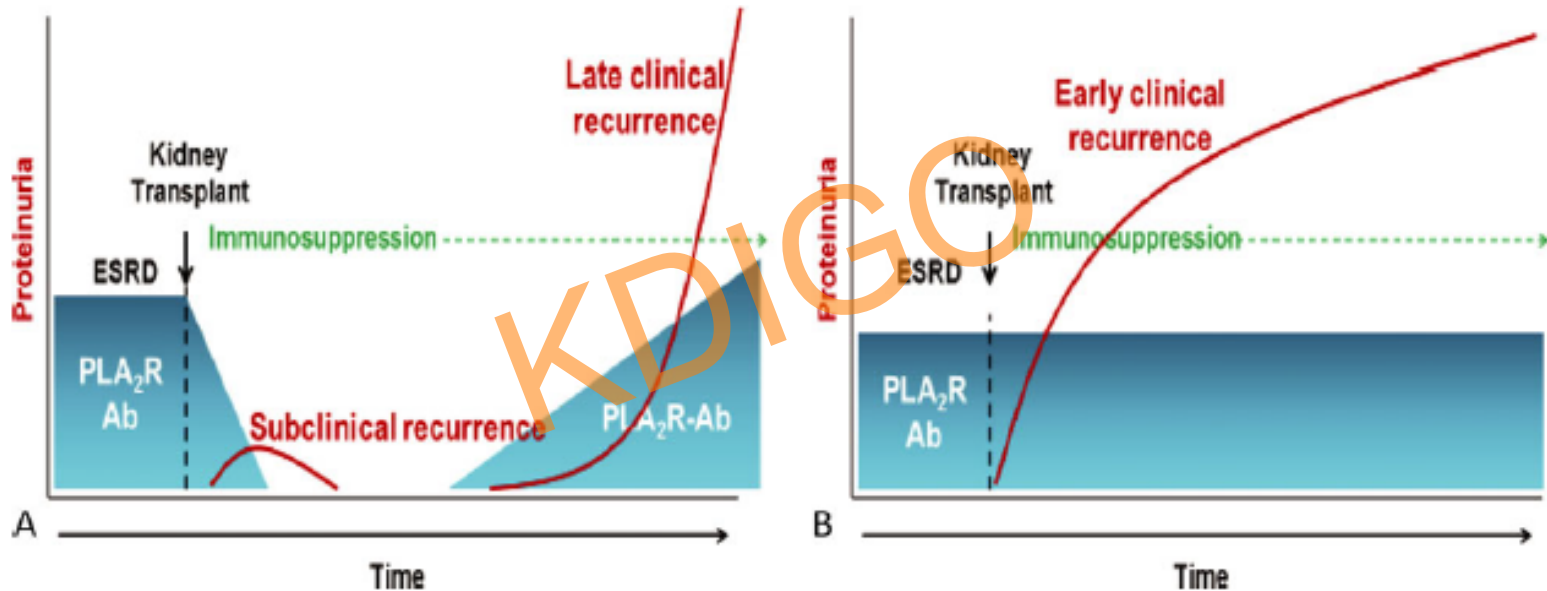
Revisit definitions of remissions and relapse to better define therapeutic endpoints?

- Immunological remission should be defined by disappearance of PLA2R-Ab by IFT (remains positive longer than ELISA)
- Complete clinical remission is easy to define
- Partial remission (and relapse) relies on proteinuria which is highly variable
- PLA2R-Ab should be considered in the definition of disease remission
- Long-term complete remission without relapse remains the ultimate goal
- But treatment should first/also aim at immunological remission (complete) which usually precedes clinical remission by several weeks or months despite outliers (epitopes to be identified)

Unsolved questions and future challenges

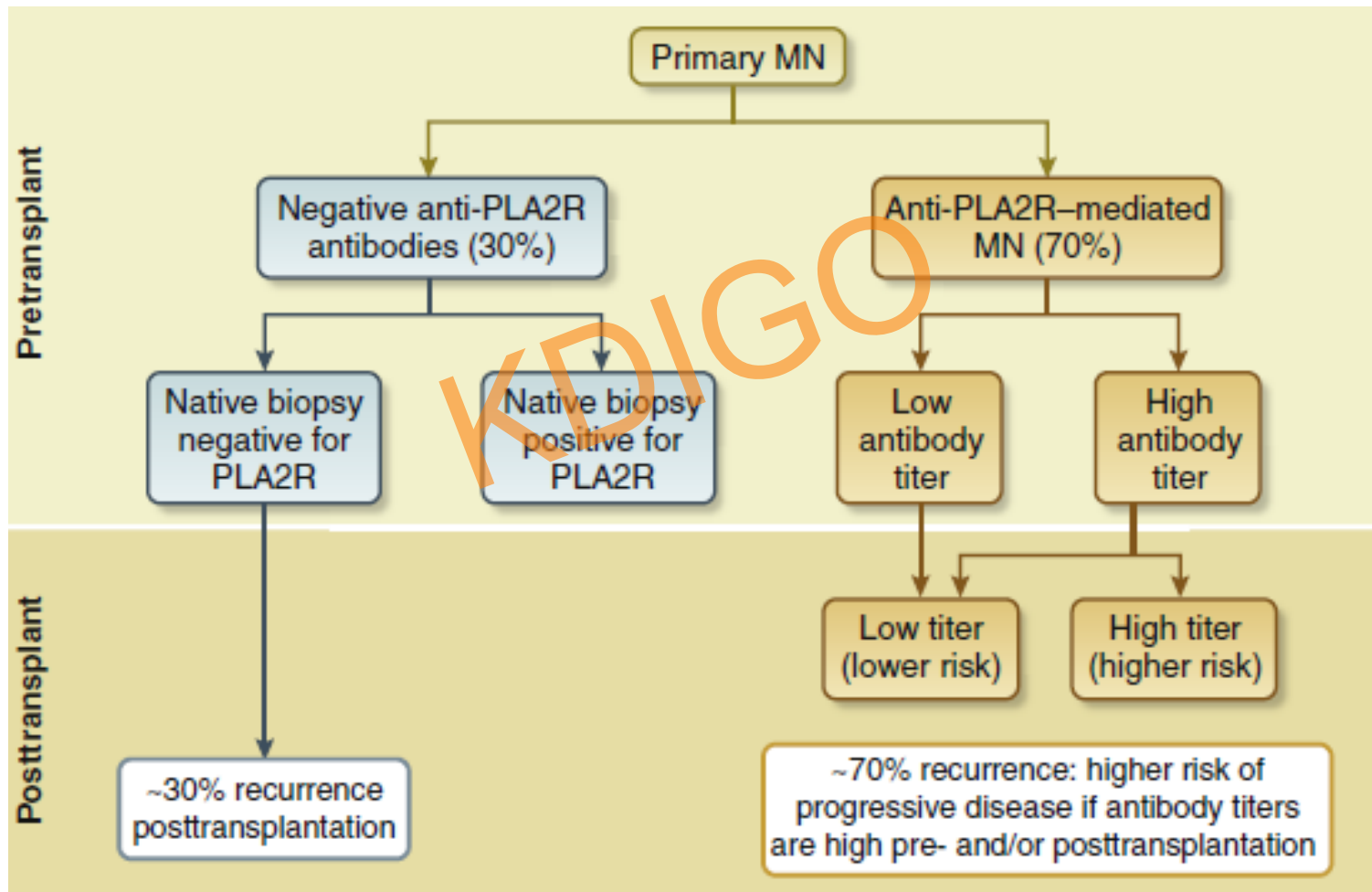
- Understand remission/ progression/recurrence
- Revisit MN classification based on antigens (causes are shared)
- Refine epitope analysis and replicate predictive value of spreading: delay treatment in patients with CysR-Ab only?
- Search for additional antigens
- Identify T-cell epitopes and replicate Treg data
- Develop anti-C5b-9 compounds
- Develop new treatment strategies (immunoabsorption, anti-B/plasma cell drugs) and combined therapies to fill the gap of the 30 to 40% failure
- Set large international trials with adaptive strategies

Proposed patterns of recurrence of membranous nephropathy according to PLA2R-Ab outcome

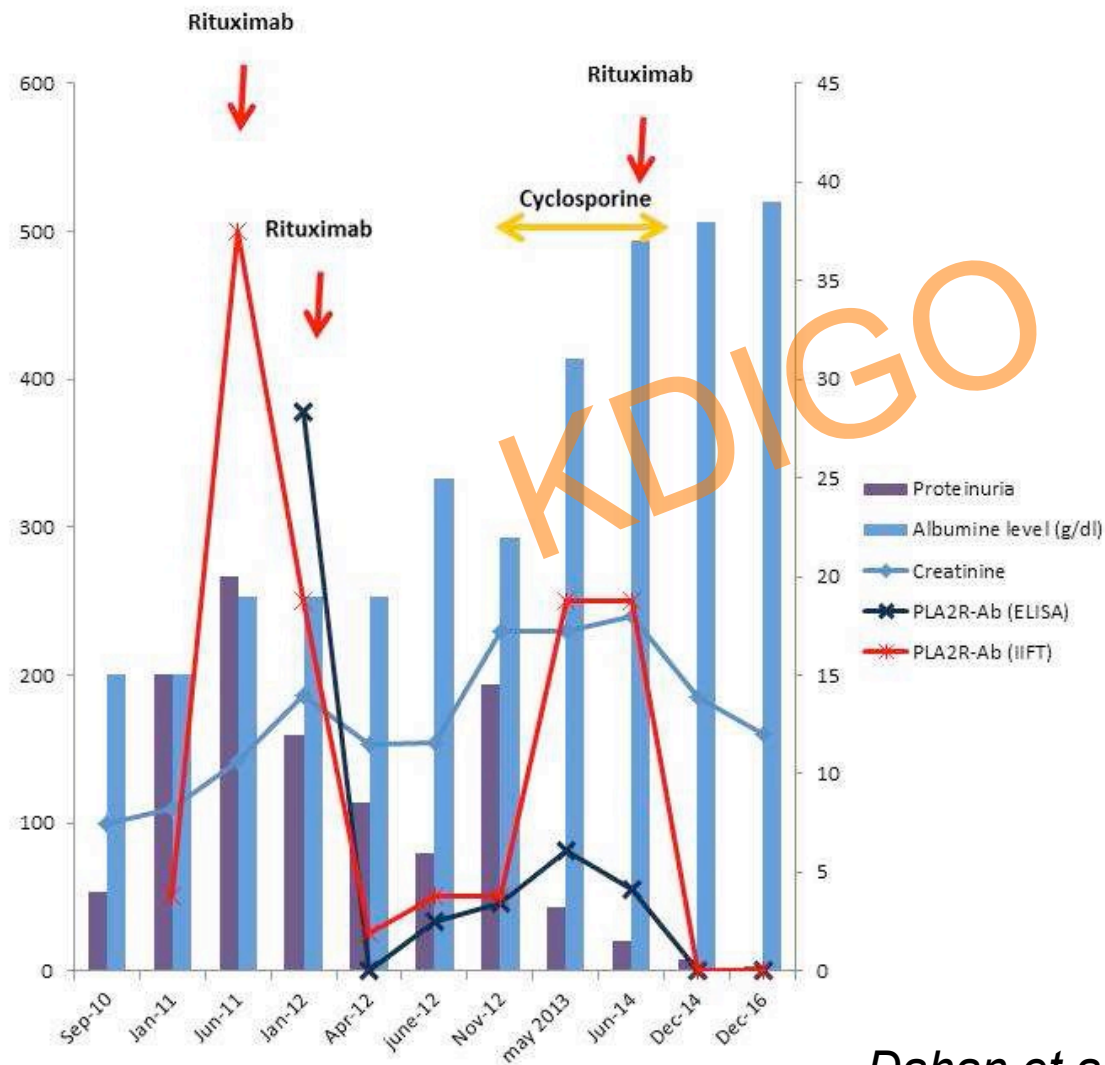


*Gupta et al, Clin Transplant 2016, 30:461 ;
Debiec et al, Am J Transplant 2011, 11:2144*

Assessment of risks of MN recurrence and progression post transplantation based on laboratory parameters obtained before and after transplantation



Complete clinical remission required complete disappearance of PLA2R-Ab by IFT



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F. Emma (Rome, I)

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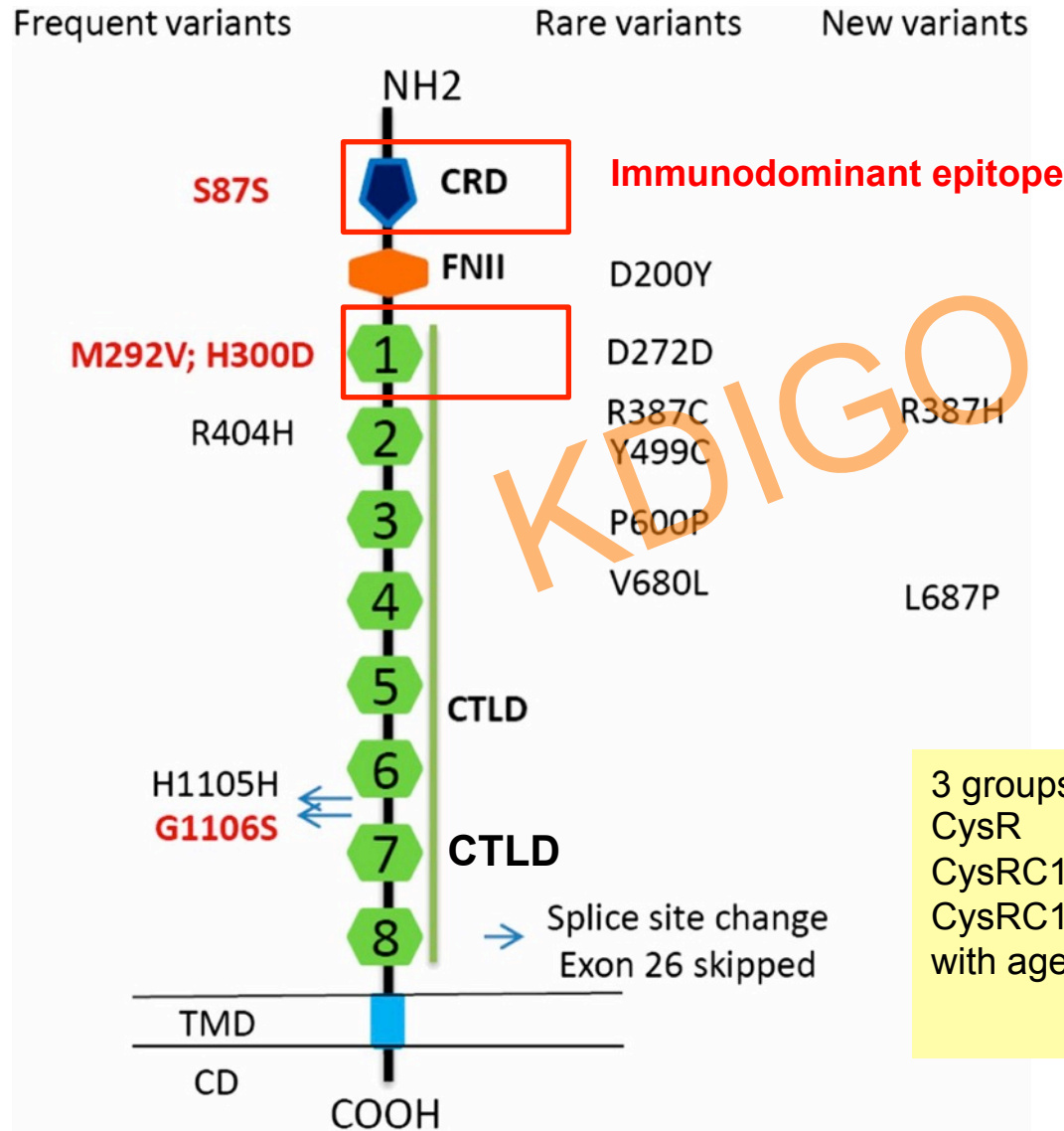
B. Seitz-Polski

V. Esnault

An indirect immunofluorescence assay for anti-THSD7A antibody (Euroimmun AG)

- 92% sensitivity and 100% specificity compared to Western blot
- **Prevalence of THSD7A associated MN : 2.6%** (prospective cohort of 345 patients)
- 40 patients with THSD7A-associated MN identified among 1276 patients with MN (retrospective and prospective, Hamburg and Boston cohorts)
- **Eight patients developed a malignancy within 3 months**
- Most patients were women

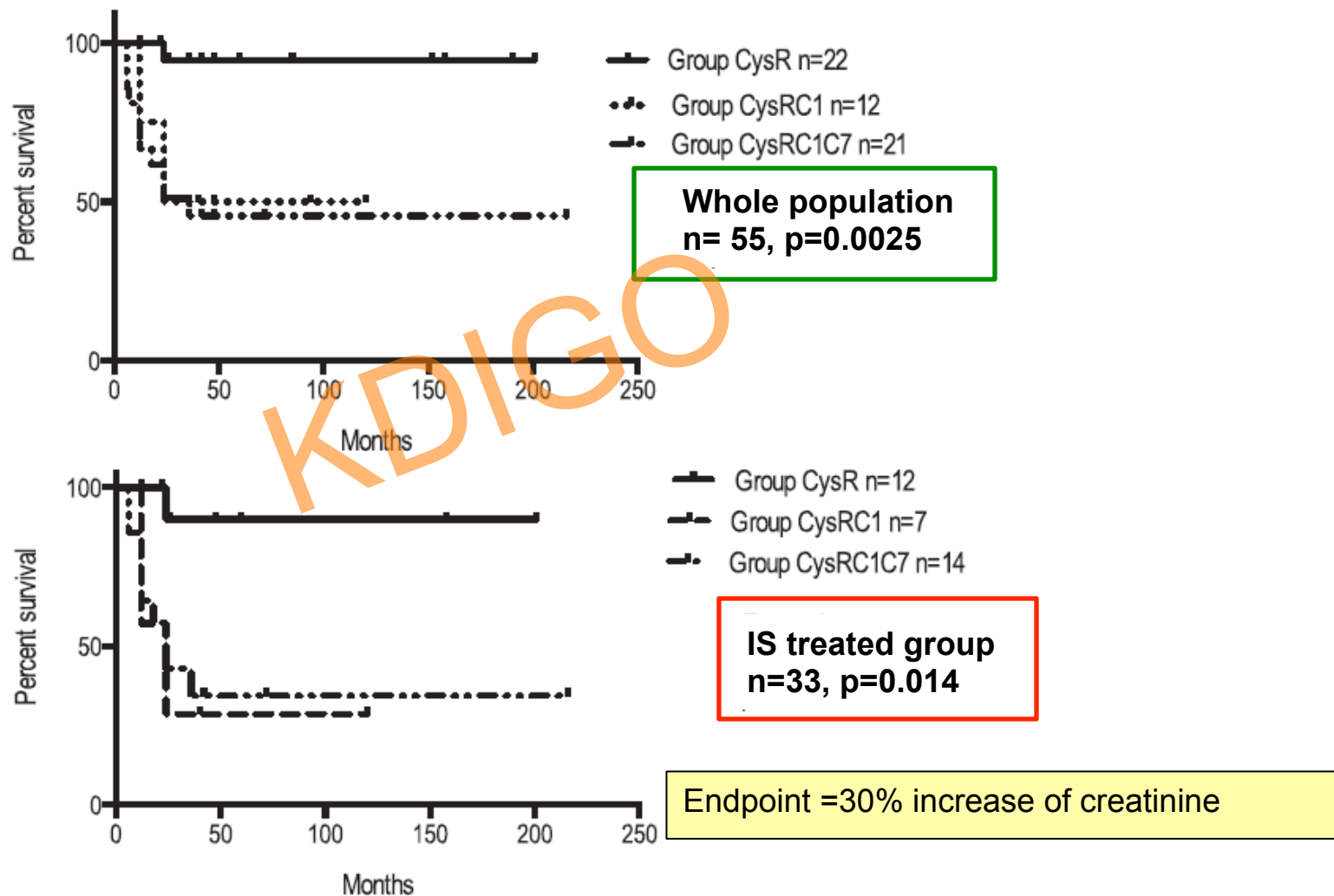
Epitope spreading as a new predictor



Coenen et al,
JASN, 2013 24:677 ;
 Seitz-Polski et al,
JASN 2016 27:1517

3 groups :
 CysR
 CysRC1
 CysRC1 C7 spreading increasing
 with age and proteinuria levels

Impact of spreading on renal function outcome

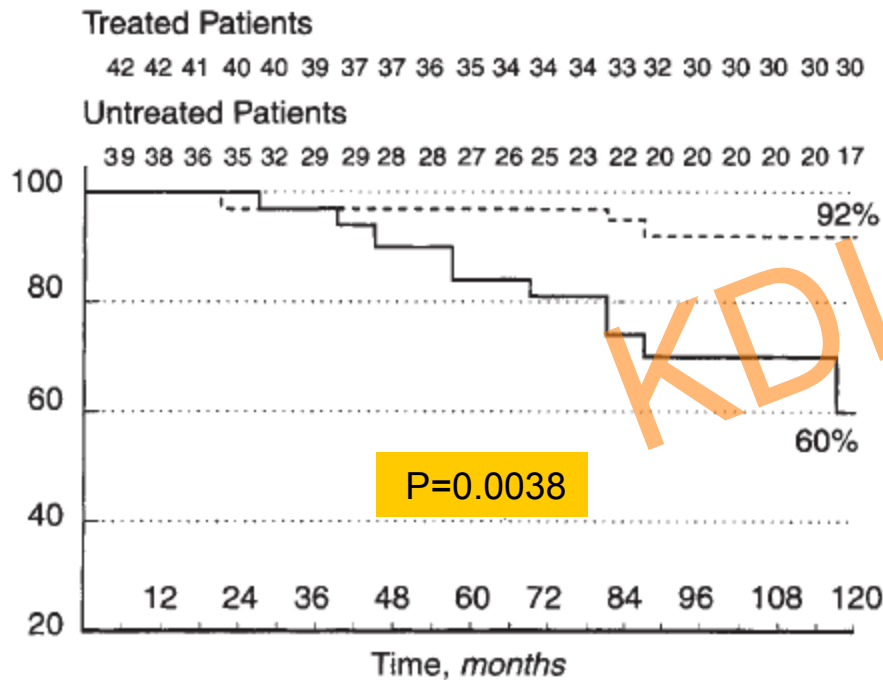


Seitz-Polski et al, JASN 2016 27:1517

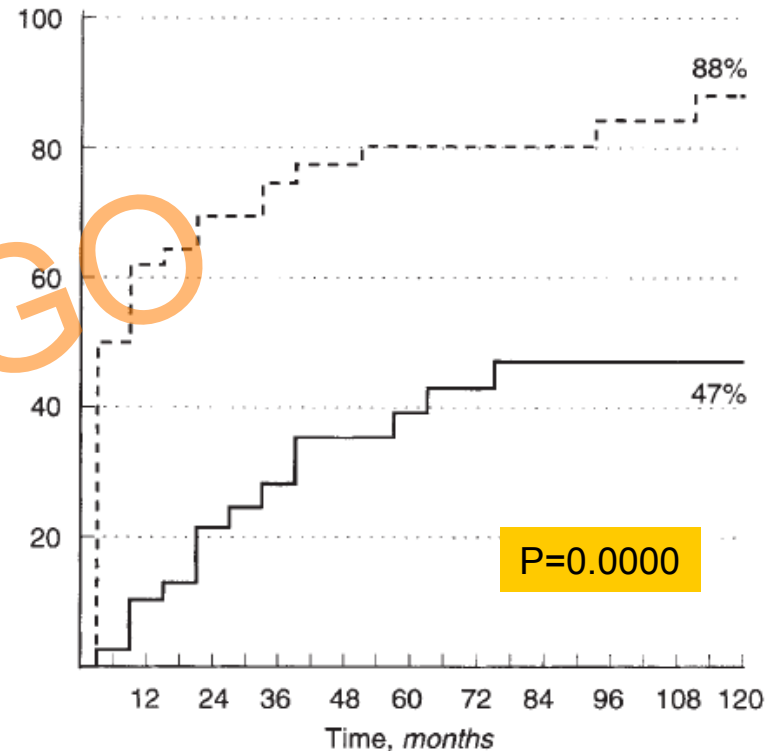


A ten-year follow-up of the Ponticelli protocol (methylprednisone and chlorambucil)

Cumulative probability of survival without dialysis



Probability of complete or partial remission



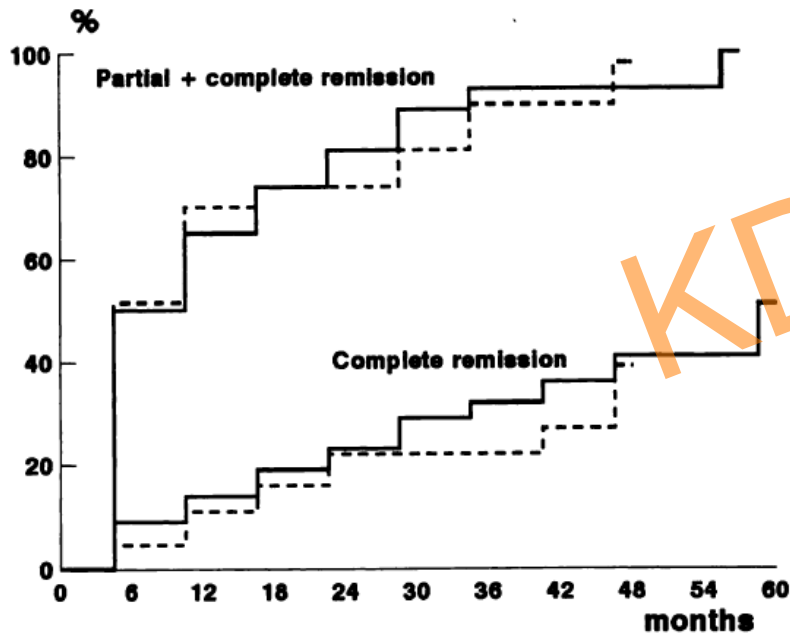
— untreated controls
- - - treated patients

Ponticelli et al, Kidney Int 1995, 48:1600

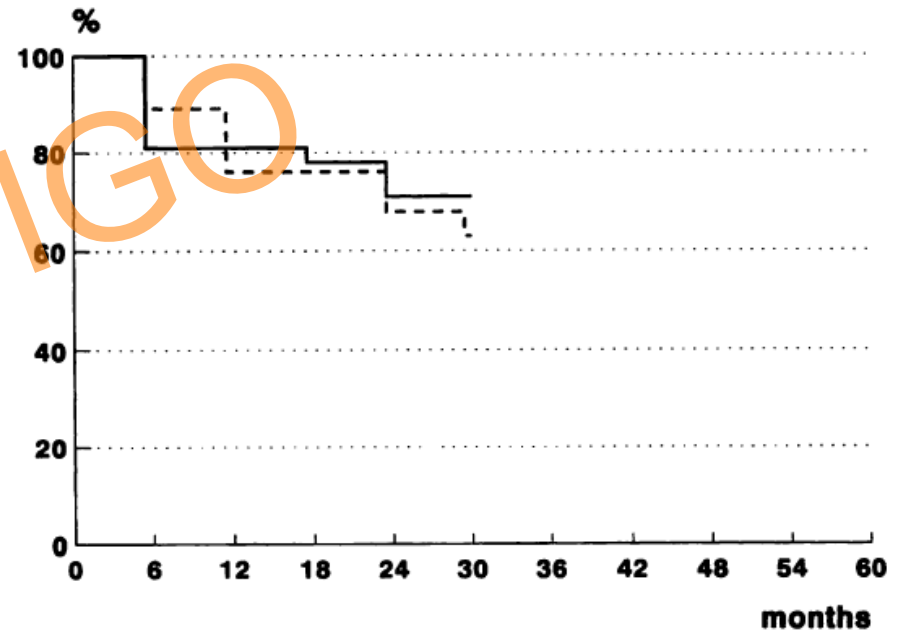


Cumulative probability of remission and relapse-free survival in patients given MP + Chlor. Vs MP + CPM

Cumulative probability of partial or complete remission



Cumulative probability of relapse-free survival



— Methylprednisolone + cyclophosphamide
- - - Methylprednisolone + chlorambucil



Severe adverse events

Severe Adverse Events	Rituximab Group (N=37)	NIAT group (N=38)
	<i>no. of events</i>	
Acute renal failure	0	2
Infection		
Prostatitis	1	0
Pleural effusion	0	1
Cardiac and vascular disorders		
Myocardial infarction	1	1
Critical limb ischemia	0	1
Mesenteric Ischemia	1	0
Carotid endarterectomy	1	0
Cancer	0	1
Acute hepatitis	0	1
Others		
Oedema	1	1
Pain	1	0
Total	6	8

Incidence of partial remissions is higher with cyclophosphamide

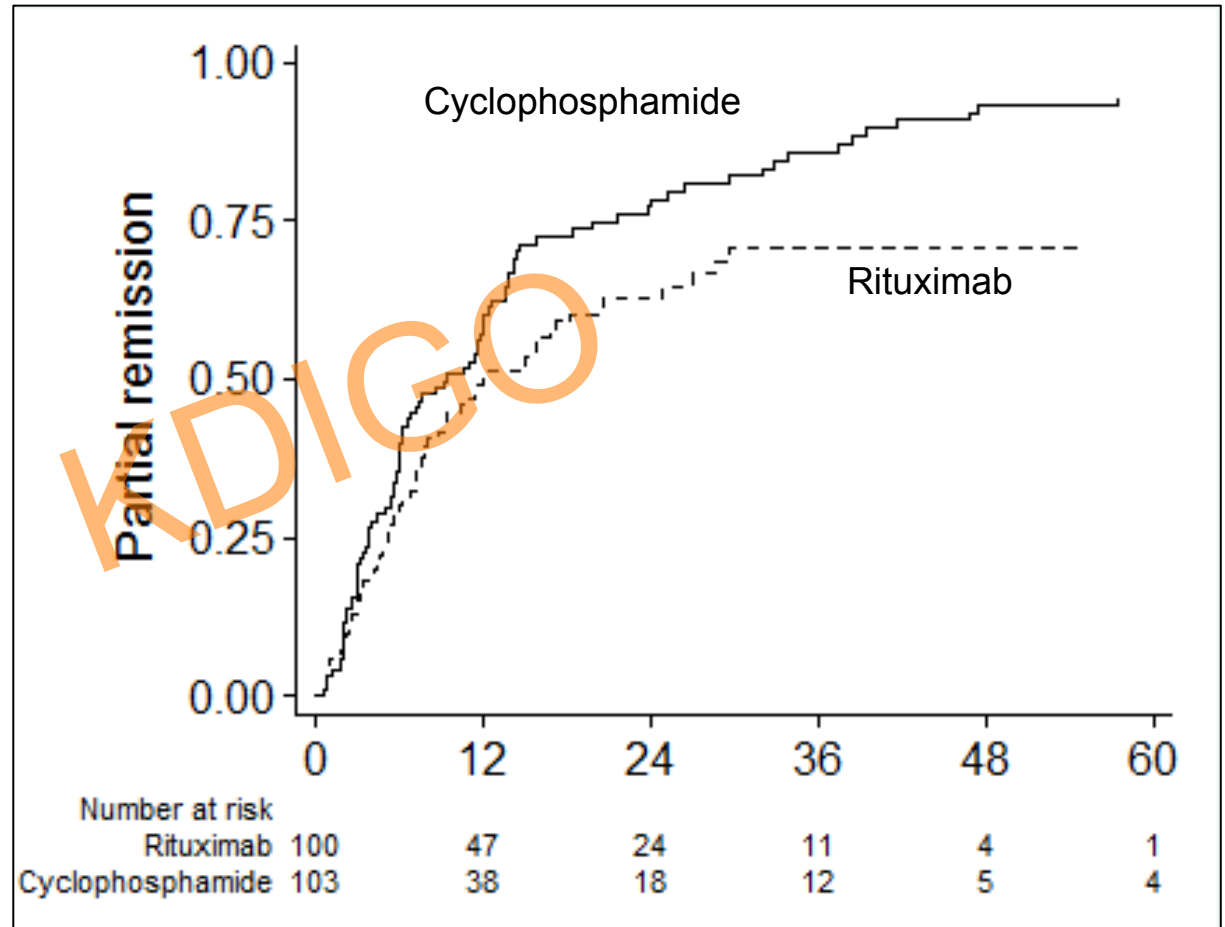
Rituximab:

Fewer (S)AE's

Complete remissions ~

Renal failure ~

Partial remissions: ↓



van de Brand, JASN 2017

Remission Status over time

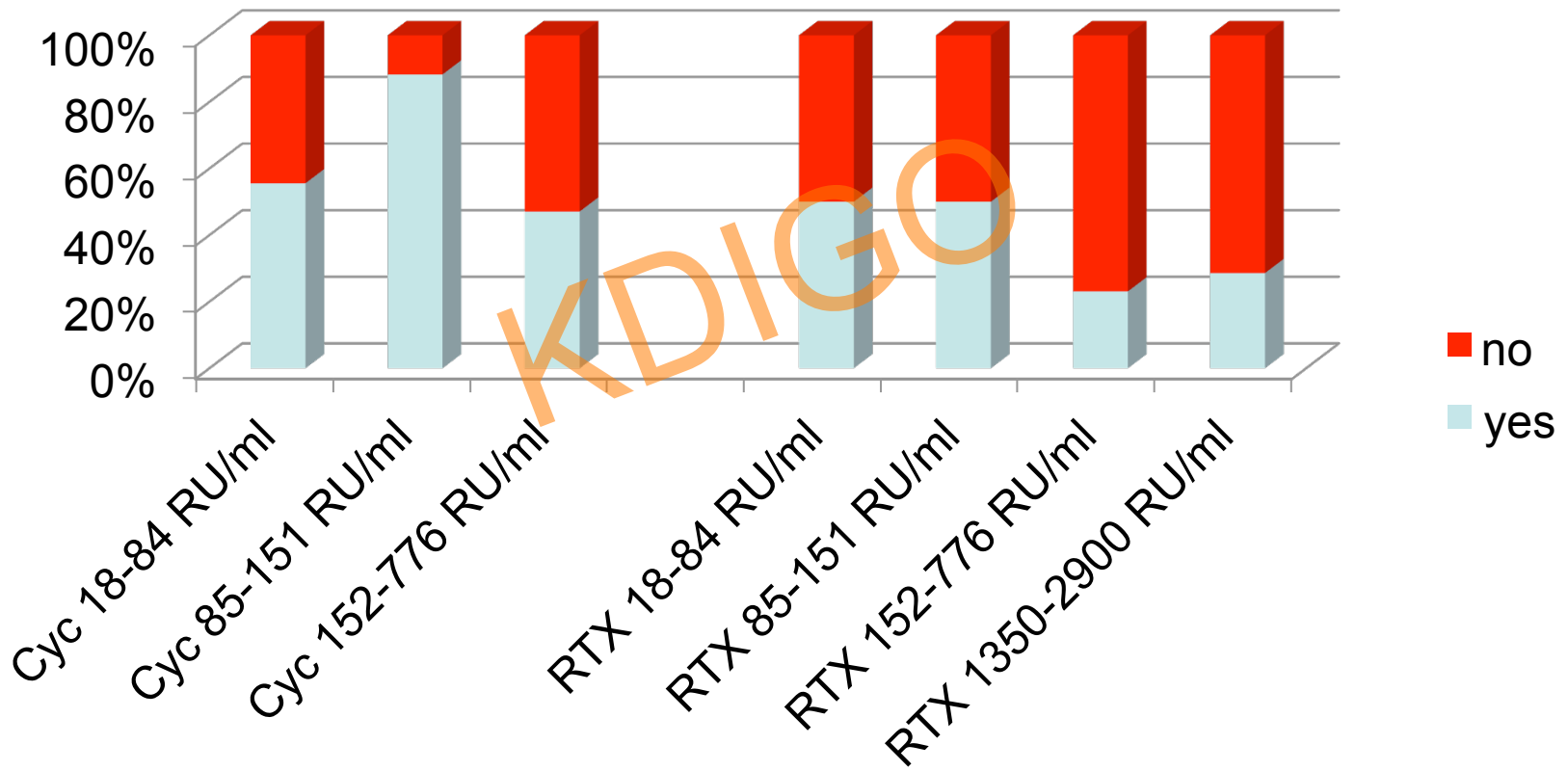
6 Months	CSA (n=63)	RTX (n=64)
Complete Remission	1	0
Partial Remission	31	23
≥25% Proteinuria reduction but not CR/PR	13	27
Treatment failure	18	14

12 Months	CSA (n=63)	RTX (n=64)
Complete Remission	3	9
Partial Remission	30	30
Treatment failure	30	25

24 Months	CSA (n=63)	RTX (n=64)
Complete Remission	0	23
Partial Remission	13	17
Treatment failure	50	24

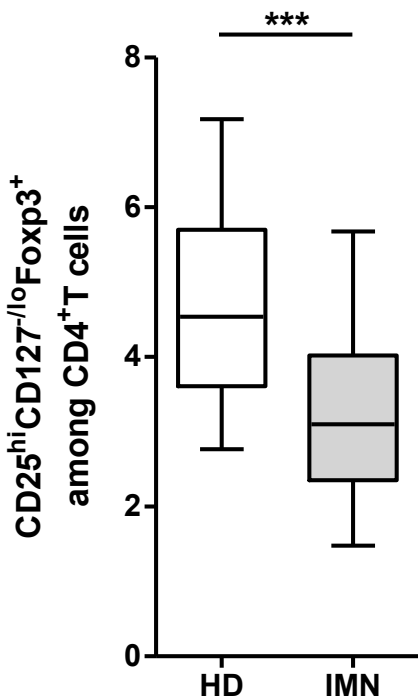
	CSA (n=65)	RTX (n=65)
Cardiac disorders	2	0
Endocrine disorders	0	1
Gastrointestinal disorders	1	1
General disorders and administration site conditions	1	1
Hepatobiliary disorders	1	0
Infections and infestations	5	3
Investigations	1	1
Metabolism and nutrition disorders	1	1
Musculoskeletal and connective tissue disorders	1	0
Neoplasms benign, malignant and unspecified (incl cysts and polyps)	0	1
Nervous system disorders	1	1
Renal and urinary disorders	3	0
Respiratory, thoracic and mediastinal disorders	1	1
Surgical and medical procedures	0	1
Vascular disorders	5	1
Total SAEs:	23	13

Results 3: clinical remission rate after 6 months

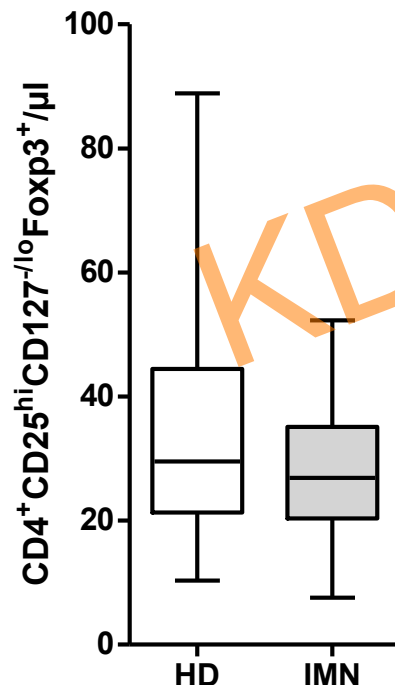


Comparison of Treg and NK cells in iMN patients and healthy donors

Treg/CD4



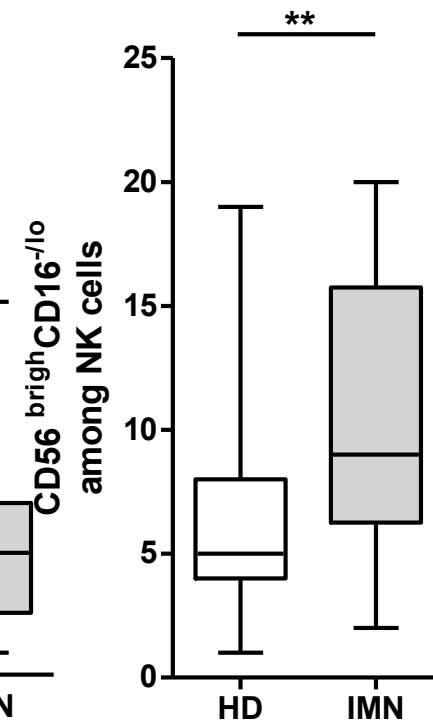
Treg/ μ L



NK



CD56^{bright}
CD16^{-/lo}

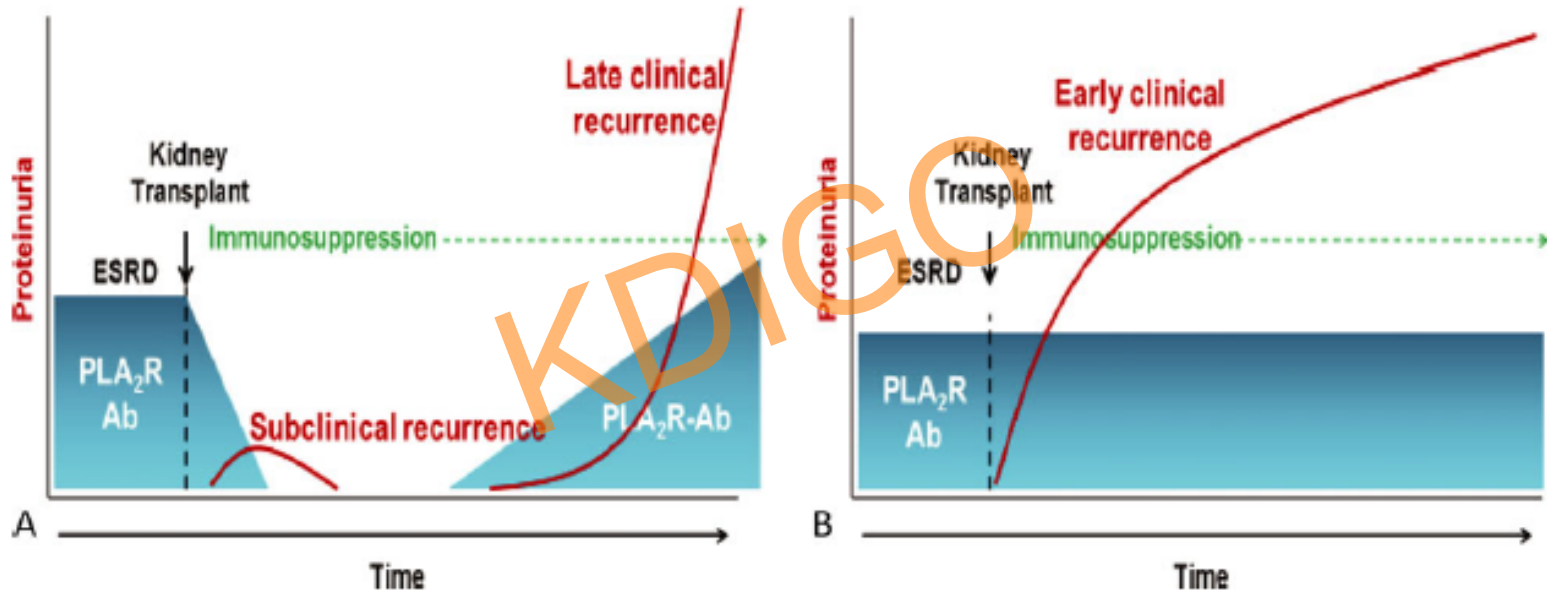


HD : Healthy blood donors (n=27)

IMN : Patients (n=25)

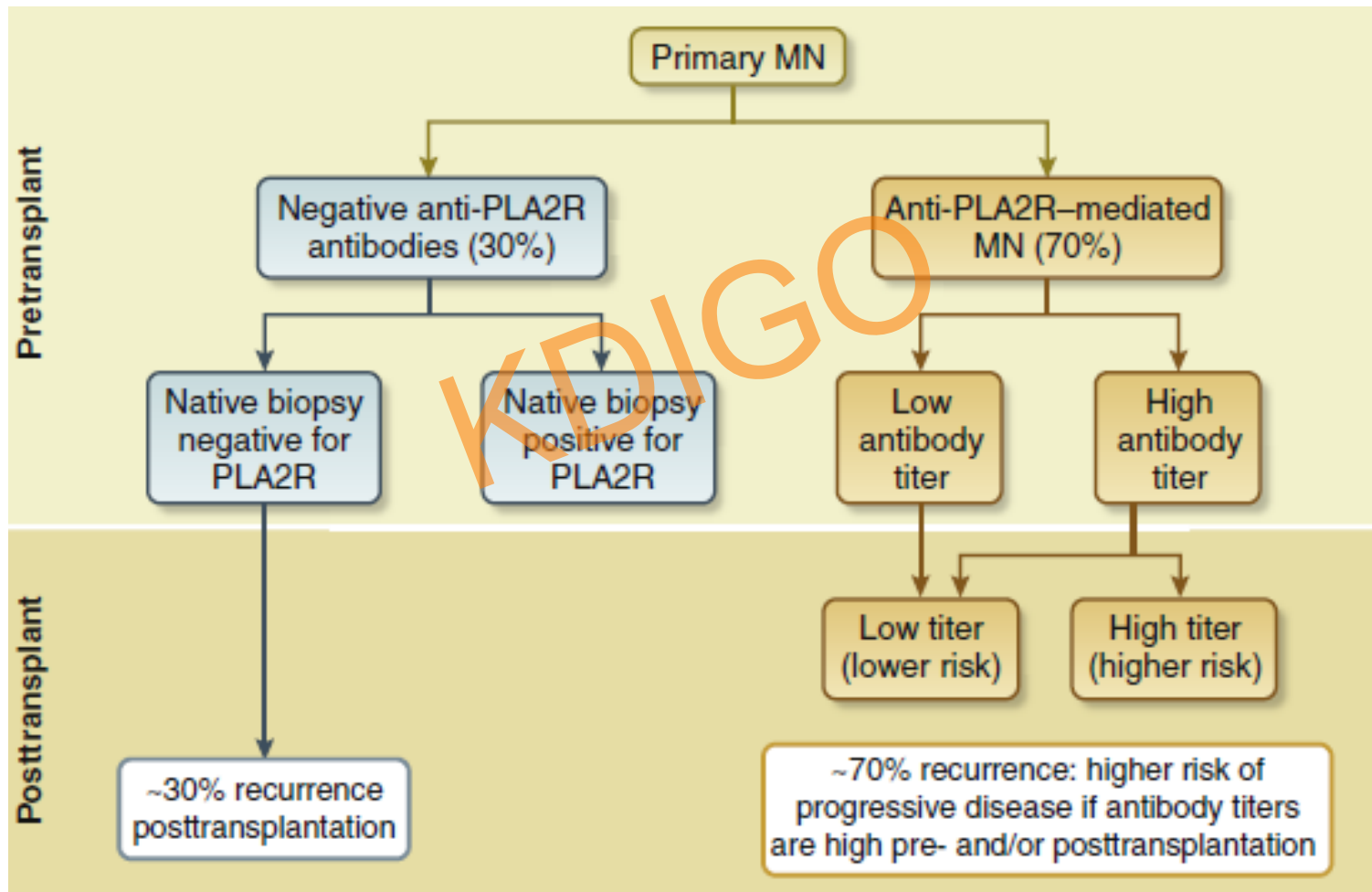


Proposed patterns of recurrence of membranous nephropathy according to PLA2R-Ab outcome



*Gupta et al, Clin Transplant 2016, 30:461 ;
Debiec et al, Am J Transplant 2011, 11:2144*

Assessment of risks of MN recurrence and progression post transplantation based on laboratory parameters obtained before and after transplantation



Predictors of recurrence in a retrospective cohort of grafted patients with MN

- 113 pairs of donors/recipients :
 - 51 R : recurrence (kidney biopsy)
 - 62 WR : without recurrence (39 biopsy proven ; 22 most likely with proteinuria < 0.5 g/day)
- Median time to R = 6 months ; to last FU = 80 months
- Early ($24 < 6$ months) vs late recurrence ($25 \geq 6$ months) and log-rank test for follow-up
- Determination of PLA2R status (serum or biopsy)
- Genetic studies (risk SNPs, allelotypes)

Clinical predictors of recurrence: cumulative probability of recurrence-free outcome

