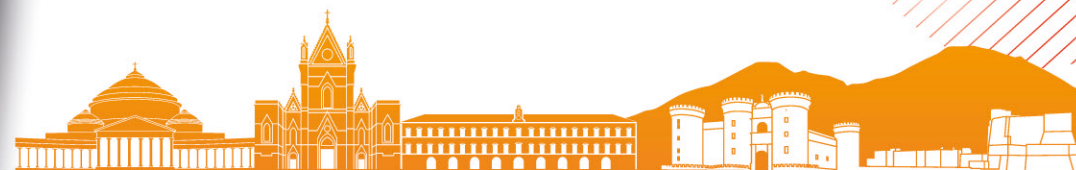


# L'approccio del patologo

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### **NEOPLASIA A CELLULE DENDRITICHE PLASMATICOIDI BLASTICHE:**

NUOVE OPZIONI DIAGNOSTICHE  
ED ALGORITMO TERAPEUTICO

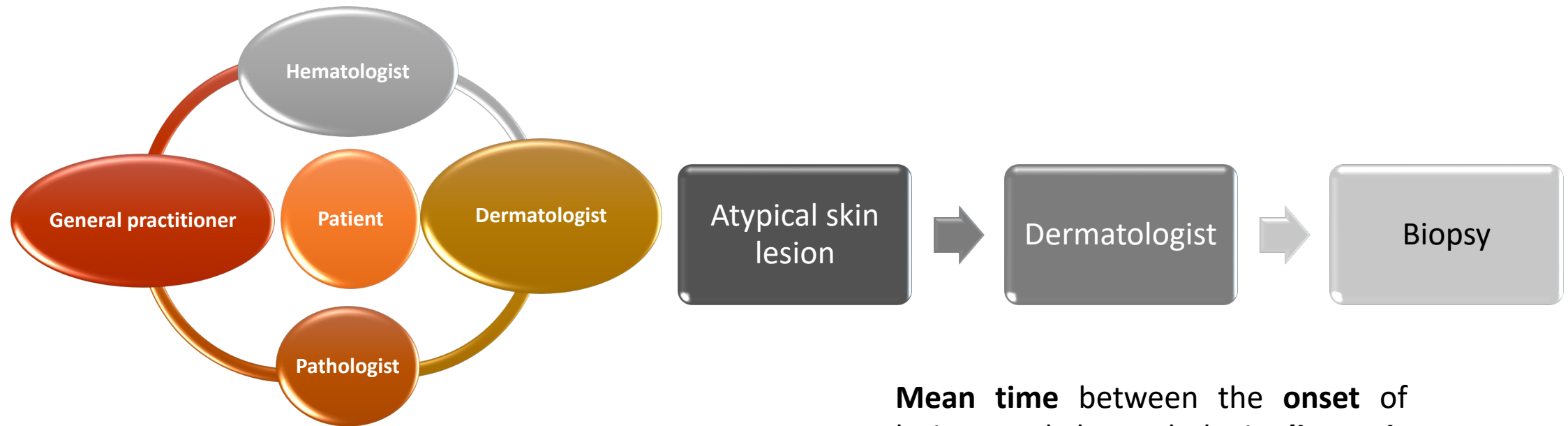
**Napoli**  
**22 Febbraio 2024**  
Grand Hotel Santa Lucia

## Disclosures:

- Eusa Pharma/Recordati Rare Disease
- KyowaKyirin
- Menarini Stemline



# A multidisciplinary approach is required to diagnose and treat BPDCN patients



**Mean time** between the **onset** of lesions and the pathologic **diagnosis** of BPDCN is **6.2 mos** based on a retrospective analysis



## Blastic plasmacytoid dendritic cell neoplasm (BPDCN):

consists of clonal proliferation of plasmacytoid dendritic cells precursors.

initially described by Adachi et al in 1994 : aggressive clinical course, tendency for skin involvement and quick progression to bone marrow and CNS, with a CD2-/CD4+/CD56+ immunophenotype

Origin remained unclear for long and led to different conflicting designations:  
agranular CD4+ natural killer cell leukemia;  
agranular CD4+/CD56+ hematodermic neoplasm;  
blastic natural killer cell lymphoma/leukemia

With understanding of BPDCN: classified as a precursor neoplasm of AML (WHO 2008) and as a distinct form of AML in the 2016 revision

2022 WHO-HEAM5

included into the chapter of histiocytic / dendritic cell neoplasms

Plasmacytoid dendritic cell neoplasms

1. Mature plasmacytoid dendritic cell proliferation associated with myeloid neoplasm
2. Blastic plasmacytoid dendritic cell neoplasm

2022 ICC

stands as a separate entity in the chapter of myeloid neoplasms: blastic plasmacytoid dendritic cell neoplasm

**30 Blastic plasmacytoid dendritic cell neoplasm**

F. Facchetti  
D.M. Jones  
T. Petrella

**WHO Classification of Tumours of Haematopoietic and Lymphoid Tissues**

**WHO Classification of Tumours of Haematopoietic and Lymphoid Tissues**

Definition: Blastic plasmacytoid dendritic cell neoplasm. The disease tends to infiltrate skin, with a predilection for the face and peripheral blood (40-50%) (92). Sites of involvement: The disease tends to infiltrate skin, with a predilection for the face and peripheral blood (40-50%) (92). Clinical features: The patients usually present with solitary or multiple nodules, plaques or nodules, plaque-like areas. Regional lymph node involvement is common (20-30%) and bone marrow involvement is minimal at presentation. The disease develops with progression to leukemia (especially thrombocytopenia) especially thrombocytopenia. Following initial response to therapy, relapses invariably occur. The disease can be severe, if relapses occur, relapses invariably occur, relapses invariably occur, relapses invariably occur. About 10-20% of cases of blastic plasmacytoid dendritic cell neoplasm are associated with or develop into acute myelomonocytic leukemia or acute myeloid leukemia (702, 923). (702, 923). These neoplasms can evolve from underlying myeloid neoplasia, or appear suddenly upon progression or relapse (702, 924, 1142). BPDCN must be distinguished from the occasional association of a myeloid neoplasm (especially chronic myelomonocytic leukemia) with massive nodal or extranodal involvement. Cytochemistry: BPDCN tumour cells are non-reactive for naphthol-butylate esterase and peroxidase.

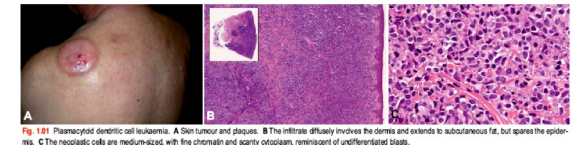
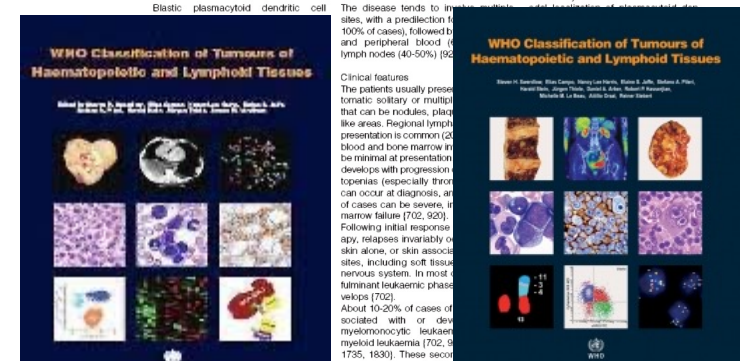


Fig. 181 Plasmacytoid dendritic cell leukaemia. A Skin tumour and plaques. B The infiltrate diffusely involves the dermis and extends to subcutaneous fat, but spares the epidermis. C The neoplastic cells are medium-sized, with the chromatin and scanty cytoplasm, reminiscent of undifferentiated blasts.

# What are the pDC ?

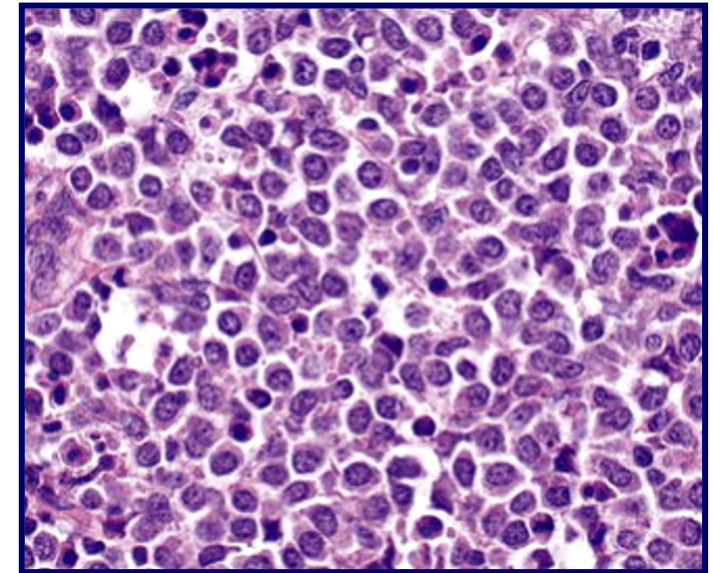
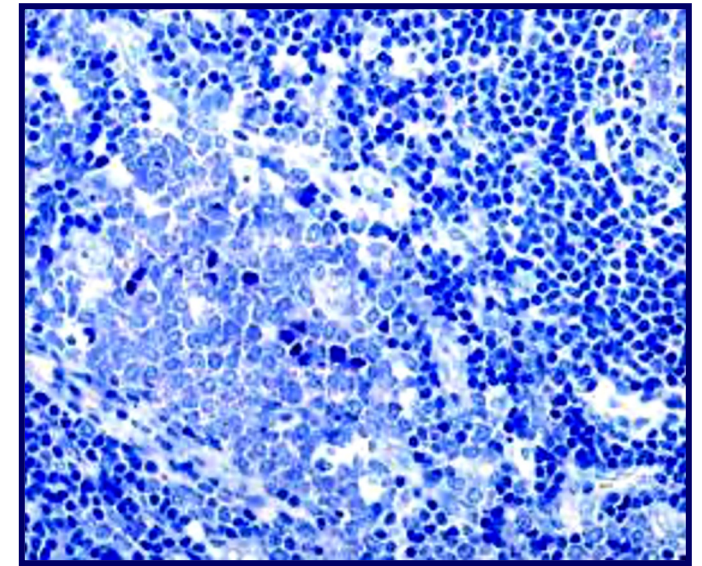


Lennert & Remmele, 1958: interfollicular cells cytologically resembling lymphoblasts

Origin was for long uncertain : variable conflicting designations proposed based on «plasma cell features» + CD4/T cell related '*T-associated plasma cell*', '*plasmacytoid T cell*', and '*plasmacytoid T-zone cell*'

Demonstration of the expression of myelomonocytic markers (CD15 and CD68)+ lack of other T-lineage markers : prompted the term '*plasmacytoid monocyte*' thus questioning their lymphoid affiliation.

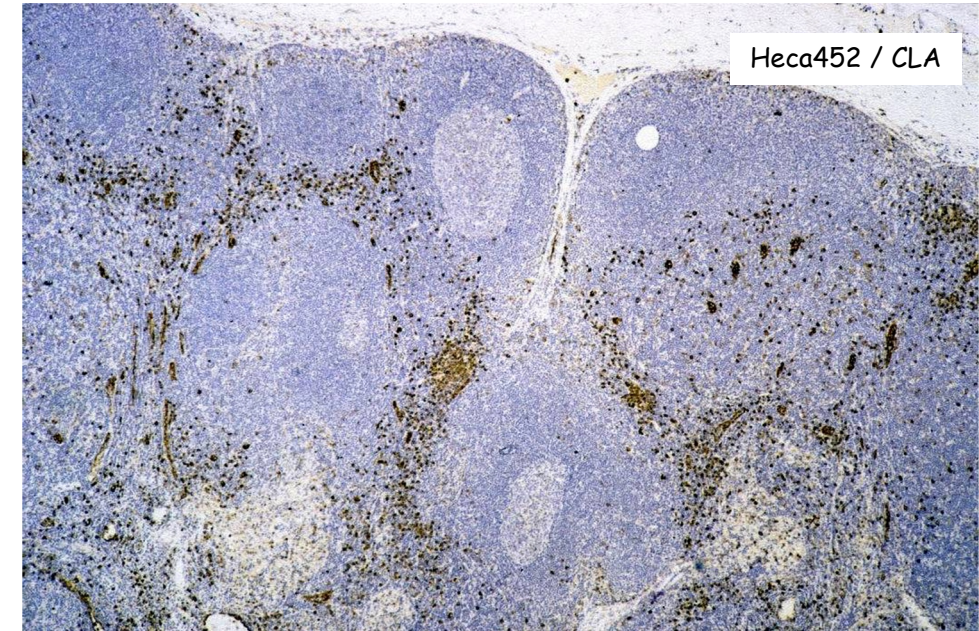
Expression of surface markers (BDCA-2/CD303, IL-3Ra/CD123), signaling molecules (BLNK, CD2AP, TCL1), and transcription factors (BCL11A, SPIB), clearly identified plasmacytoid dendritic cells (pDCs): *plasmacytoid dendritic cells; interferon producing cells*



Lennert K, Remmele W. *Acta Haematol.* 1958; Muller-Hermelink HK et al. *Am J Surg Pathol* 1983; Facchetti F et al. *Am J Pathol* 1988; Cella M et al. *Nat Med* 1999; Facchetti F et al. *Virchows Arch* 2003; Soumelis V et al. *Eur J Immunol* 2006; Bjorck P et al. *J Immunol* 2011; Takagi H et al. *Immunity* 2011; Reizis B et al. *Annu Rev Immunol* 2011; Chaperot et al., 2001; Garnache-Ottou et al., 2009; Herling et al., 2003; Jaye et al., 2006; Marafioti et al., 2008; Montes-Moreno et al., 2013; Petrella et al., 2002)

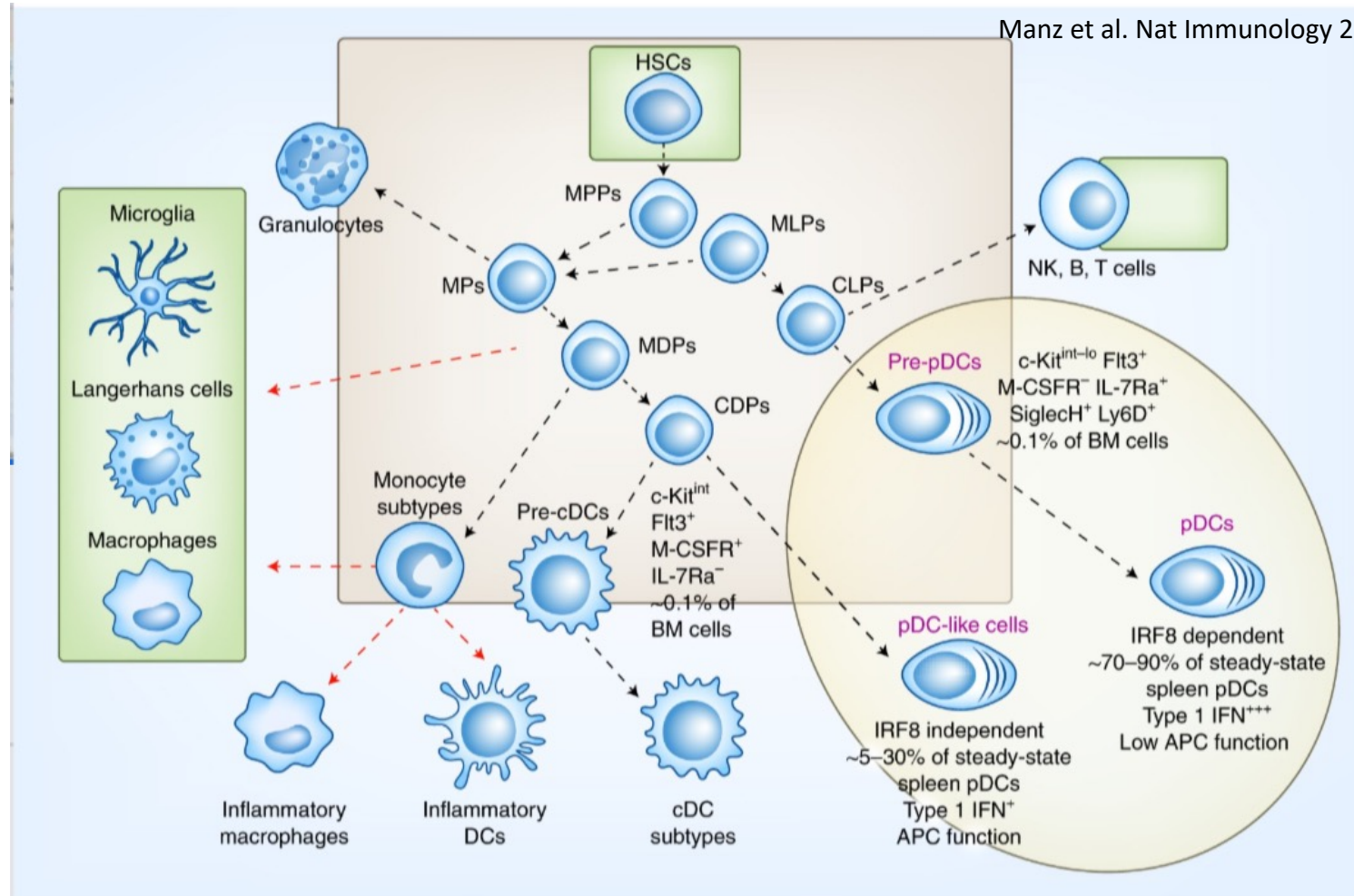


- highly specialized circulating cells normal pb/marrow they represent <1% of all cells)
- most type 1-IFN ( $\alpha/\beta$ ) producers (fastest responder to INF-I inducers and major cellular source of IFN-alpha)
- key players in the immune response; may exert effector functions by releasing cytotoxic molecules (TRAIL and granzyme B)
- home to diseased tissue (> skin and lymph nodes), in various types of inflammatory conditions (autoimmunity, cancer, virus infections)
- primarily reside in lymph nodes and tonsils (generally related to an ongoing immune reaction); rarely in thymus, bone marrow, spleen and MALT; nearly absent in peripheral non-lymphoid tissues



*Facchetti F et al. Hum Pathol 1988; Jegalian AG et al. Adv Anat Pathol 2009; Vermi W et al. Immunobiology 2009; Vermi W et al. J Leukoc Biol 2011*



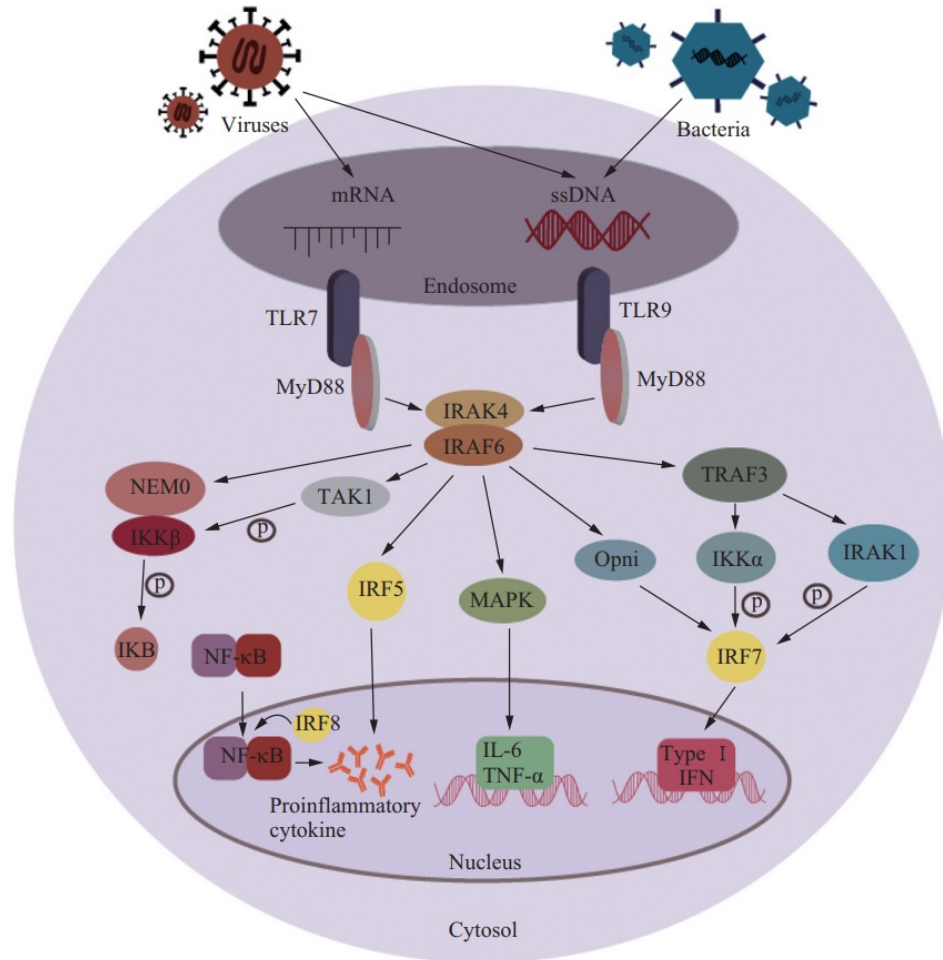


*FLT3, TCF4, IRF8, BCL11A, SPIB, RUNX2, IRF7*

Naik SH et al. Nat Immunol, 2007; Onai N et al. Immunity, 2013; Onai N et al. Nat Immunol, 2007; Facchetti F et al. Mod Pathol, 2016; D'Amico A et al. J Exp Med, 2003; Karsunky H et al. J Exp Med, 2003; Cisse B et al. Cell 2008; Nagasawa M et al. Eur J Immunol, 2008; Ghosh HS et al. Immunity, 2010; Reizis B Curr Opin Immunol, 2010; Belz GT et al. Nat Rev Immunol, 2012; Li HS et al. Blood, 2012; Maraskovsky E et al. Blood 2000





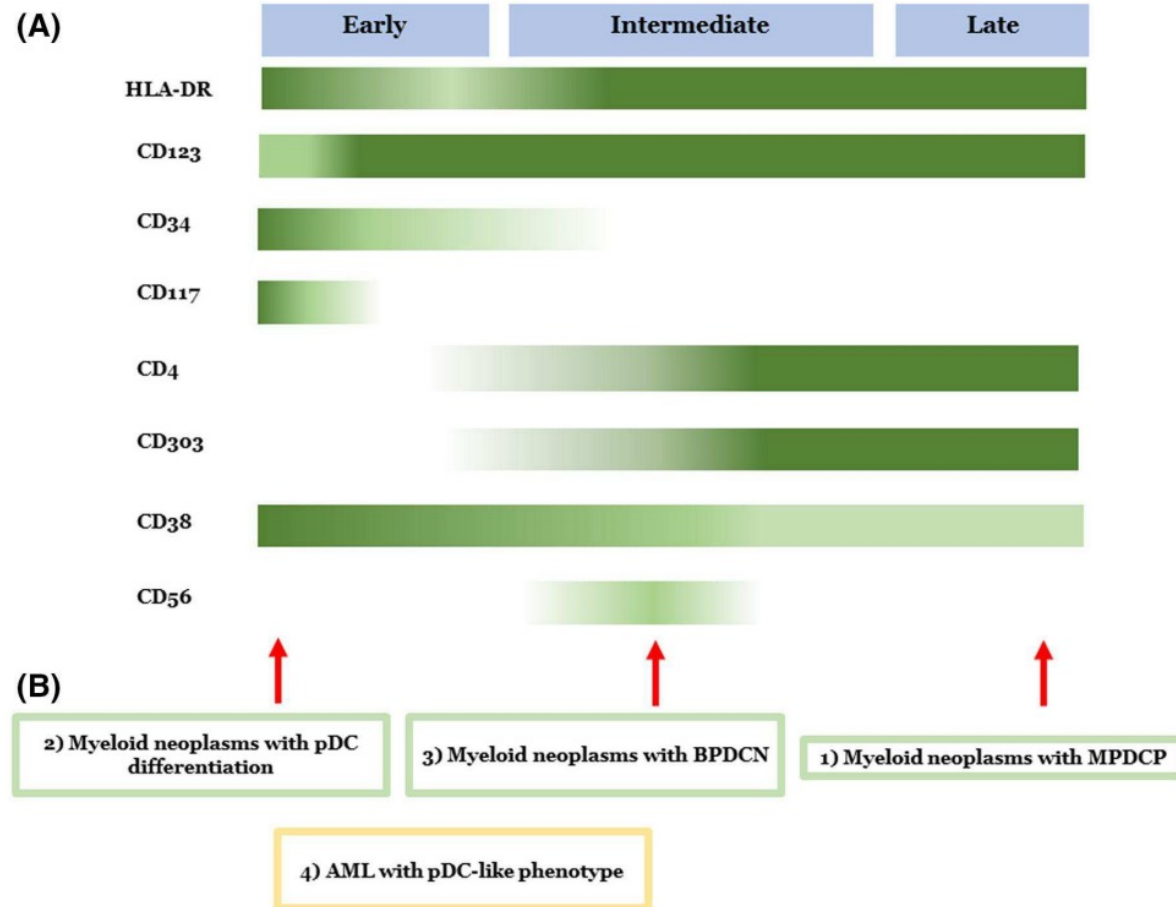


pDCs as bridge between innate and adaptive immune systems working as APC

recognizes nucleic acid sequences from virus and bacteria --- *via* the TLR 7/9-MyD88, activation of many cellular pathways (including IRF7, IRF5, MAPK, NFκB) with production of cytokines (IFN-α and IL6, IL-8, and IL-12) and activation of T cells, NK and macrophages



El Hussein&Wang, BJH 2022



- CD45 gradually increases
- 3 step maturation from early precursors and late/mature cells based on CD34/CD117 (immature markers) and more specific pDC markers (CD303, CD4, CD123), CD56 and CD38
- subset of normal pDC expresses CD56 (mostly associated with neoplastic and blastic phenotype); this explains the heterogeneity in the phenotype of pDC proliferations
- Origin of the various disease where pDC are involved might derive from the different subsets



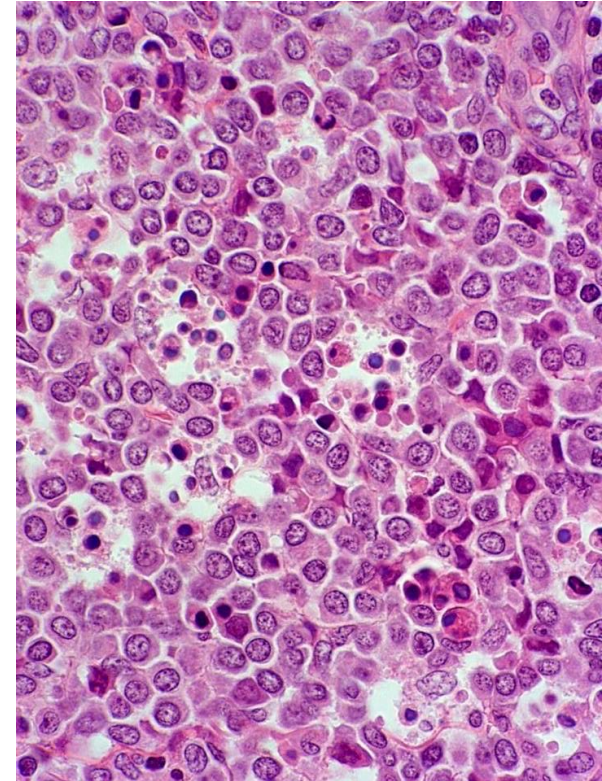
**Plasmacytoid dendritic cells neoplasms**

F Facchetti *et al*

**Table 1** Normal plasmacytoid dendritic cells immunophenotype

	<i>Positive on plasmacytoid dendritic cells</i>	<i>Negative on plasmacytoid dendritic cells</i>
B-cell antigens T-cell antigens	<b>TCL1<sup>a</sup></b> , BCL7A <sup>a</sup> , BCL11a <sup>a</sup> , SPI-B <sup>a</sup> CD4	CD19, CD20, CD22 <sup>b</sup> , CD79a, PAX5, sIg, cIg CD2 <sup>c</sup> , CD3, CD5 <sup>c</sup> , CD7 <sup>c</sup> , CD8, CD103, LAT, T-bet, TCR-AB, TCR-GD, ZAP70 CD16, CD56 <sup>c</sup> , perforin, TIA-1
NK/cytotoxic cells antigens	Granzyme B ←	
Myeloid/monocytic/ dendritic cells antigens	CD36, CD68 ← <b>BDCA2/CD303<sup>d</sup></b> , BDCA-4/CD304	CD11b, CD11c, CD13, CD14, CD15, CD33 <sup>c</sup> , CD163, DC-LAMP/CD208, elastase, esterases, langerin/CD207, lysozyme, myeloperoxidase, mannose receptor/CD206, DC-SIGN/CD209 CD1c/BDCA1, CD141/BDCA3
Miscellaneous antigens	CD11a, CD31, CD32, CD40, CD43, CD44, CD45RA, CD45RB, CD49e, CD62L, CD71, CD74, <b>CD123</b> , CD128, BAD-LAMP, CLA/CD162, <b>CD2AP</b> , E-cadherin, HLA-ABC, HLA-DP, HLA-DQ, HLA- DR, MxA, TLR1/CD281, TLR6/CD286, TLR7/287, TLR9/CD289, TLR10/290	CD1a, CD10, CD21, CD23, CD25, CD27, CD28, CD30, CD34, CD35, CD38, CD45R0, CD57, CD64, CD65, CD80, CD83, CD86, CD94, CD95, CD117, CD125, CD138, CDw150, CD161, BCL2, ←CL6, FOXP3, ILT3, MUM1/IRF4, S100, TdT, TLR2/CD282, TLR3/CD283, TLR4/CD284, TLR5/CD285, TLR8/CD288

**E2-2/TCF4**



# Neoplastic proliferation of pDC

- Blastic Dendritic Plasmacytoid Cell Neoplasm: neoplastic proliferation of PDC precursors/blasts
  - Coexisting myeloid and BPDC neoplasms
- Myeloid Neoplasm associated with proliferation of mature PDC
- Myeloid neoplasms (mostly AML) with PDC differentiation (pDC-AML)
- Myeloid neoplasms (mostly AML) with PDC-like phenotype (no PDC biology)



# BPDCN

Rare

no racial or ethnic predominance

> males (M/F: 3/1)

>adults (mean/median age at diagnosis of 58/65 years; range 0–96)

5% patients younger than 10 years

from immature cells with plasmacytoid dendritic cell differentiation resting, non-activated; aberrant NF-κB pathway activation; defective type I interferon signaling postulated to be related to E-cadherin expression

## Localization :

skin most commonly involved (60-95% of patients), followed by bone marrow and lymph nodes; CNS involvement may be detected at diagnosis, common at relapse

## Presentation:

Dermatopathic variant

Leukemic variant



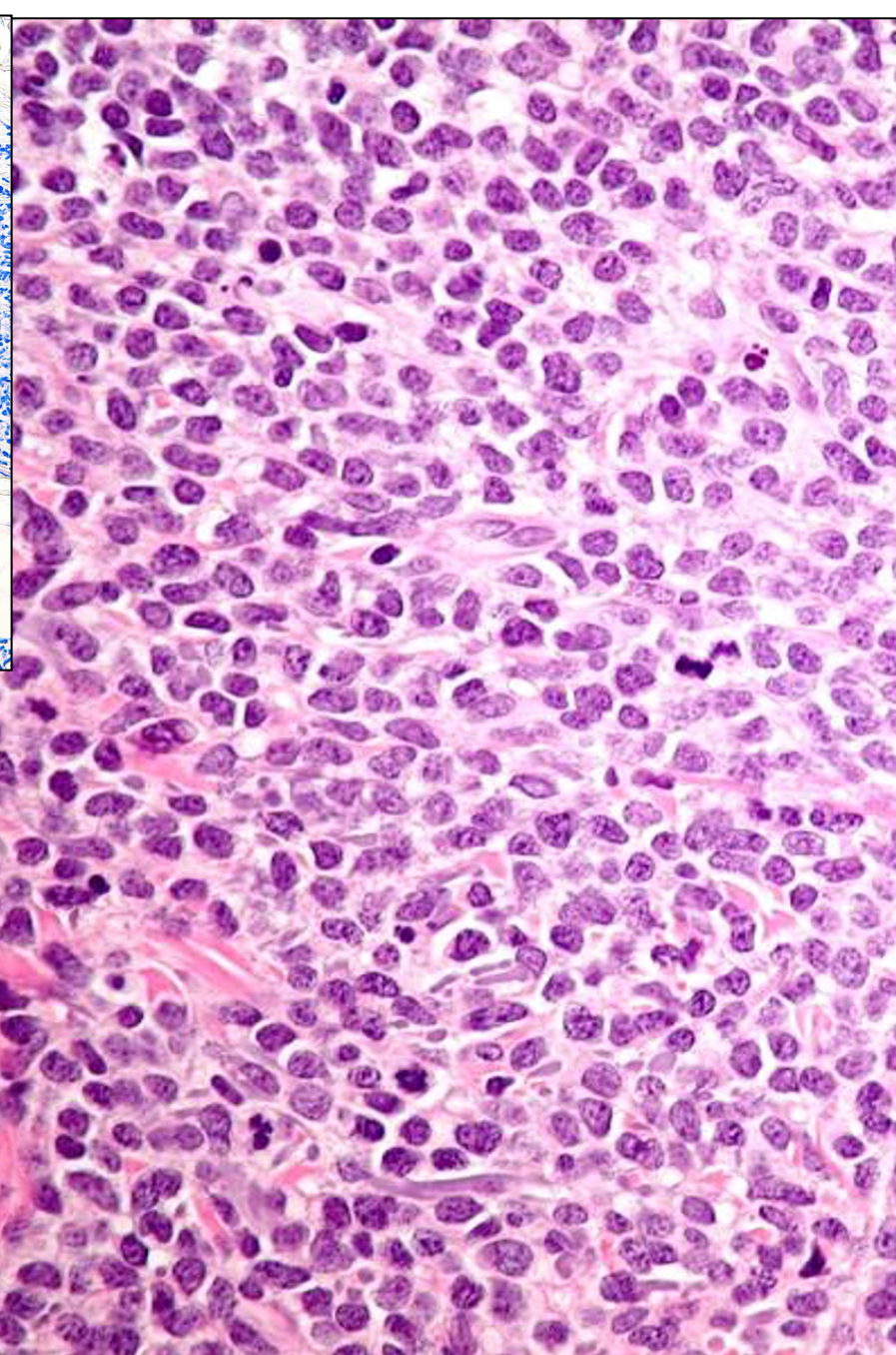
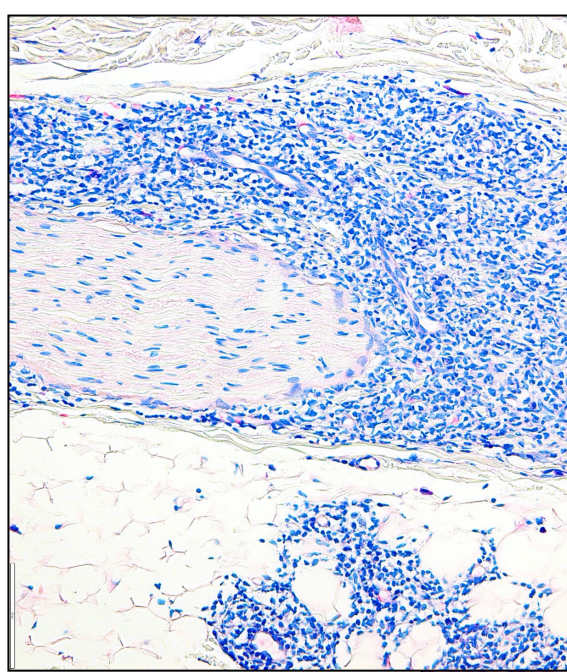
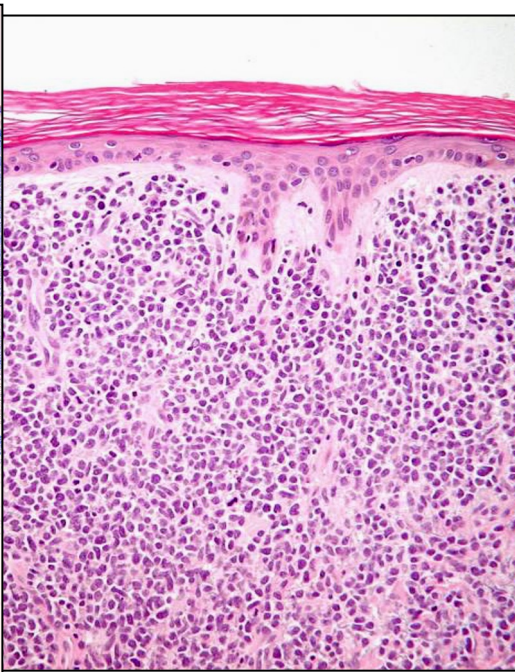
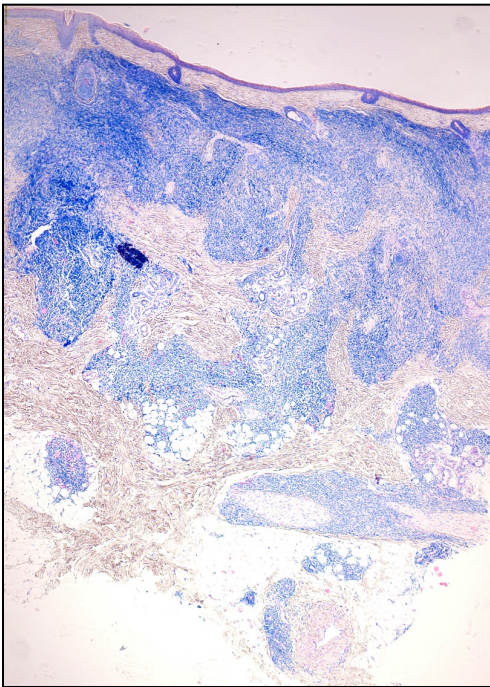
## Dermatopathic variant

- >90% cases
- cutaneous tropism : attributed to skin-migration antigens (CLA and CD56), and local availability of chemokines binding cognate receptor expressed by neoplastic plasmacytoid dendritic cells (CXCR3, CXCR4, CCR6, CCR7)\*.
- Papules, Papulo-nodular lesions, patches, plaques, isolated nodules; violaceous or purplish-like Eruptive appearance; asymptomatic; rare ulceration; variable size (few mm to 10 cm)
- Skin lesions as only detectable clinical manifestation 50%
- With generalized lymphadenopathy at presentation (40%) spleen (25%), liver (16%) enlargement
- Mucosal lesions described more rarely



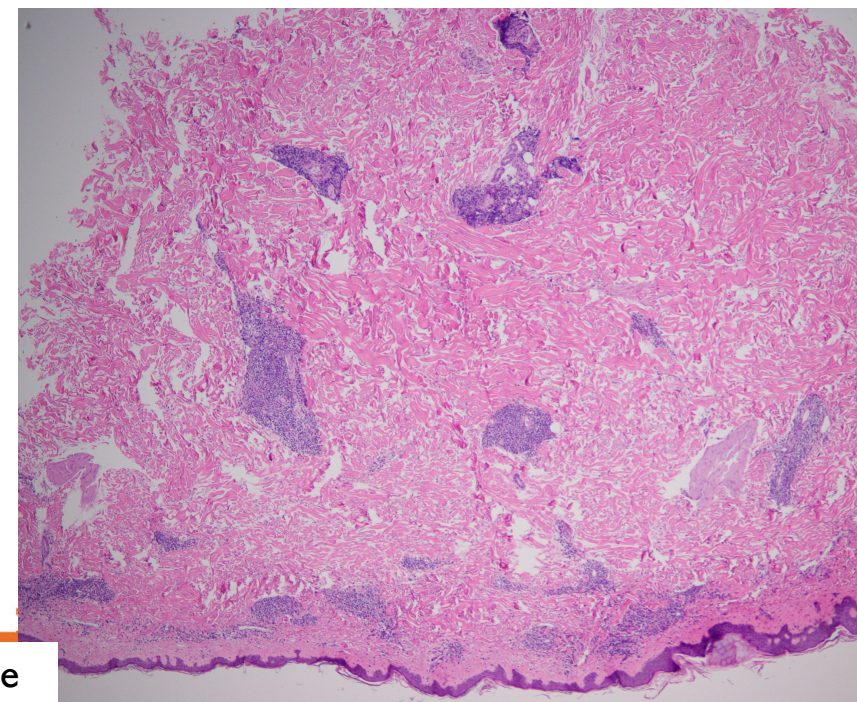
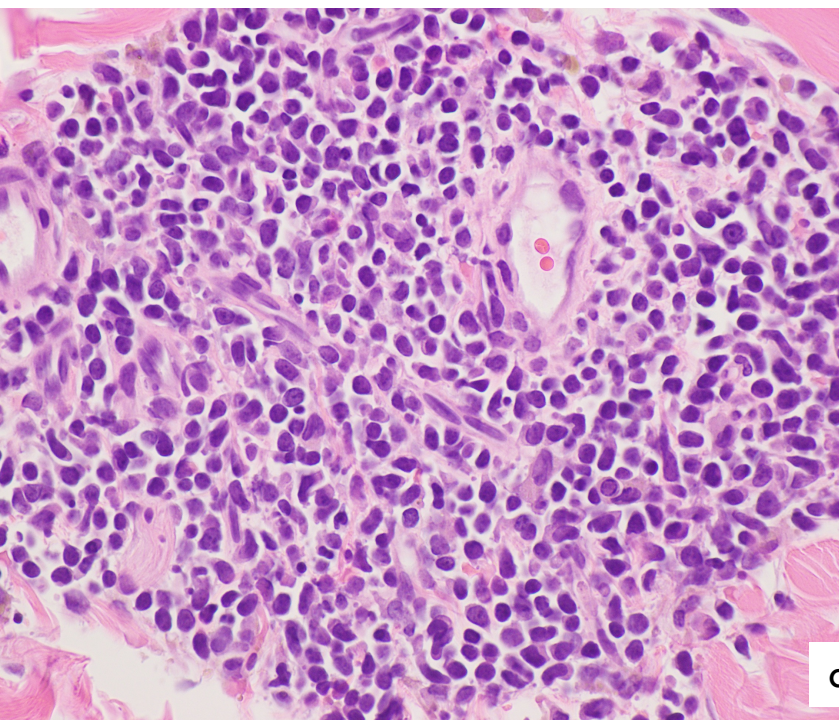
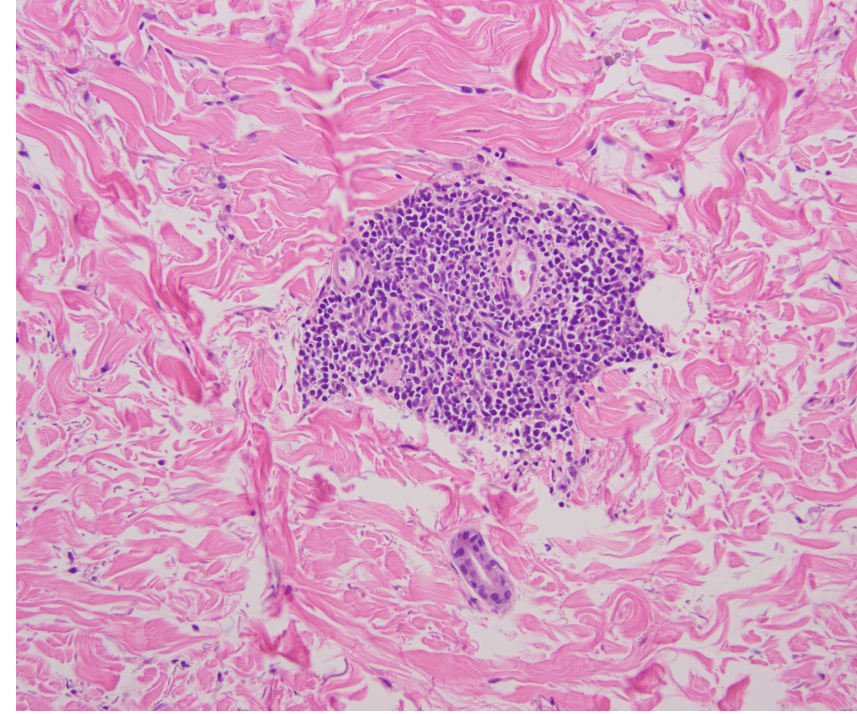
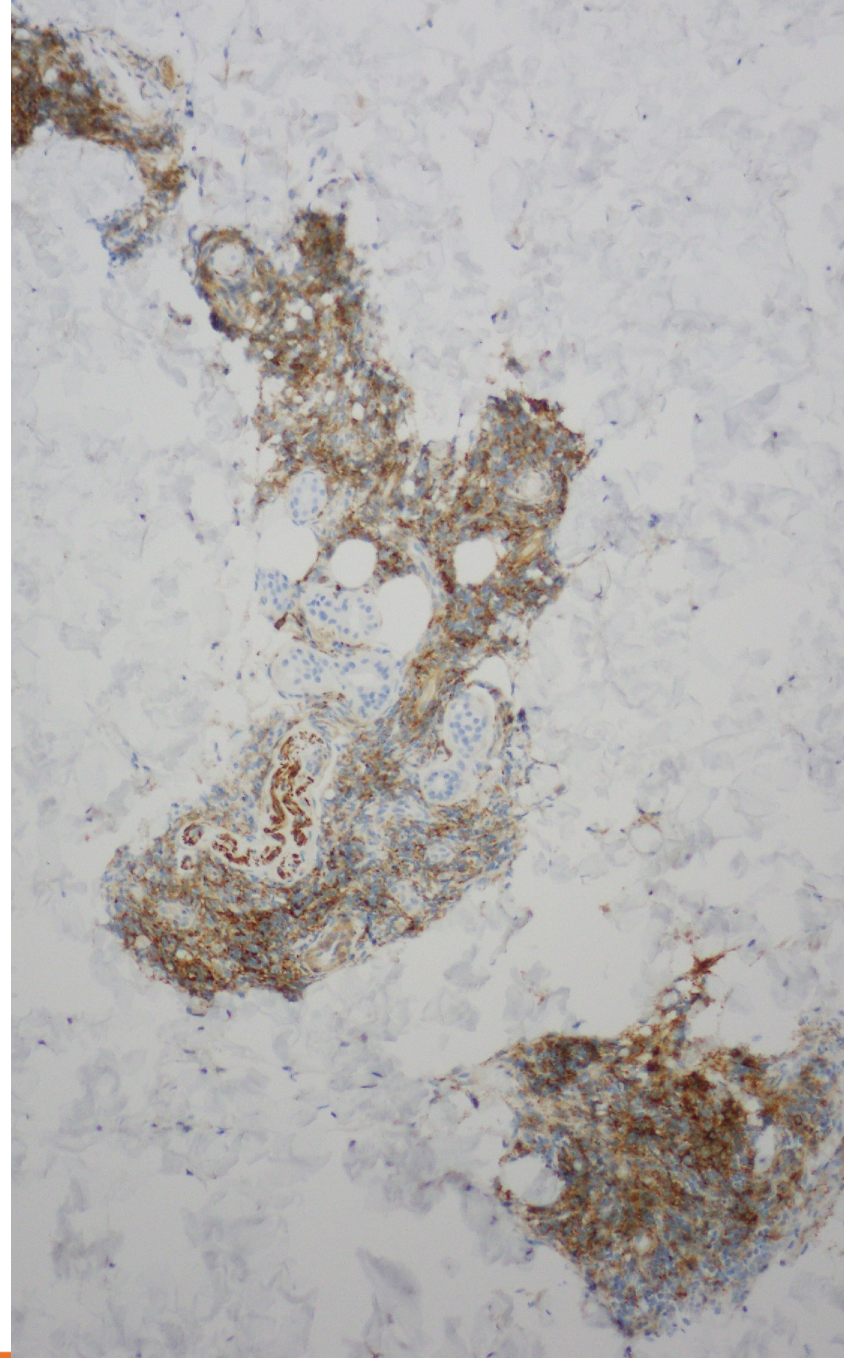
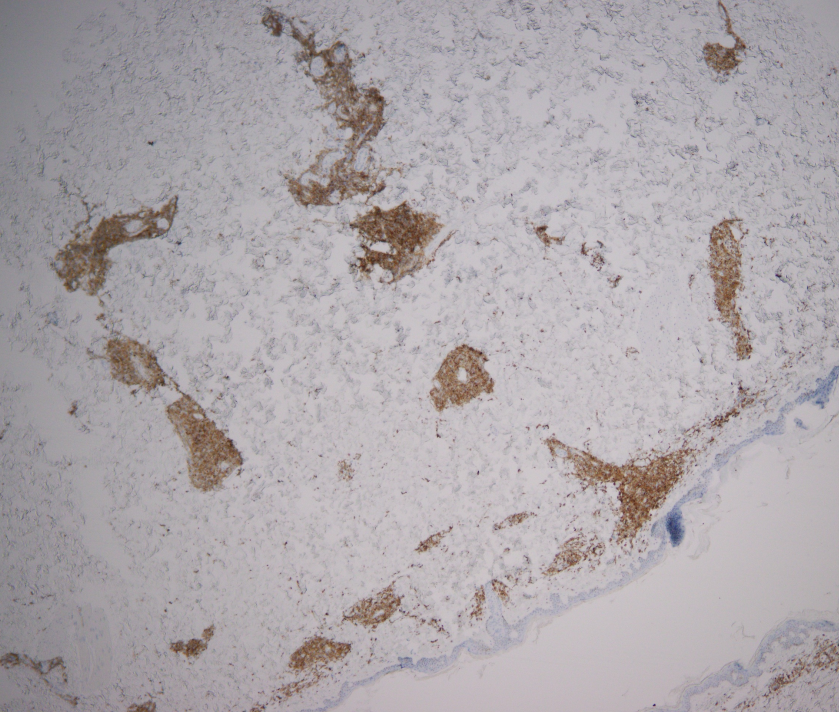
\*Facchetti et al. Leukemia 2004; Khoumry et al. Leukaemia 2022





## SKIN

monomorphic medium-sized blast cells (irregular, eccentrically located nuclei; finely dispersed chromatin; one/more small but distinctive nucleoli); moderately abundant/non granular cytoplasm; angioinvasion and coagulative necrosis rare; dermal and adipose tissue involved; no epidermo-adxenal tropism; Mitoses variable in number, often evident;



cytology can be underestimated if the infiltrate is subtle



**Leukaemic variant:** elevated WBC, circulating blasts, and massive bone marrow infiltration; >multiple skin lesions  
7% purely leukaemic

#### LYMPH NODE

involvement can be observed; efface the structure from the paracortical area

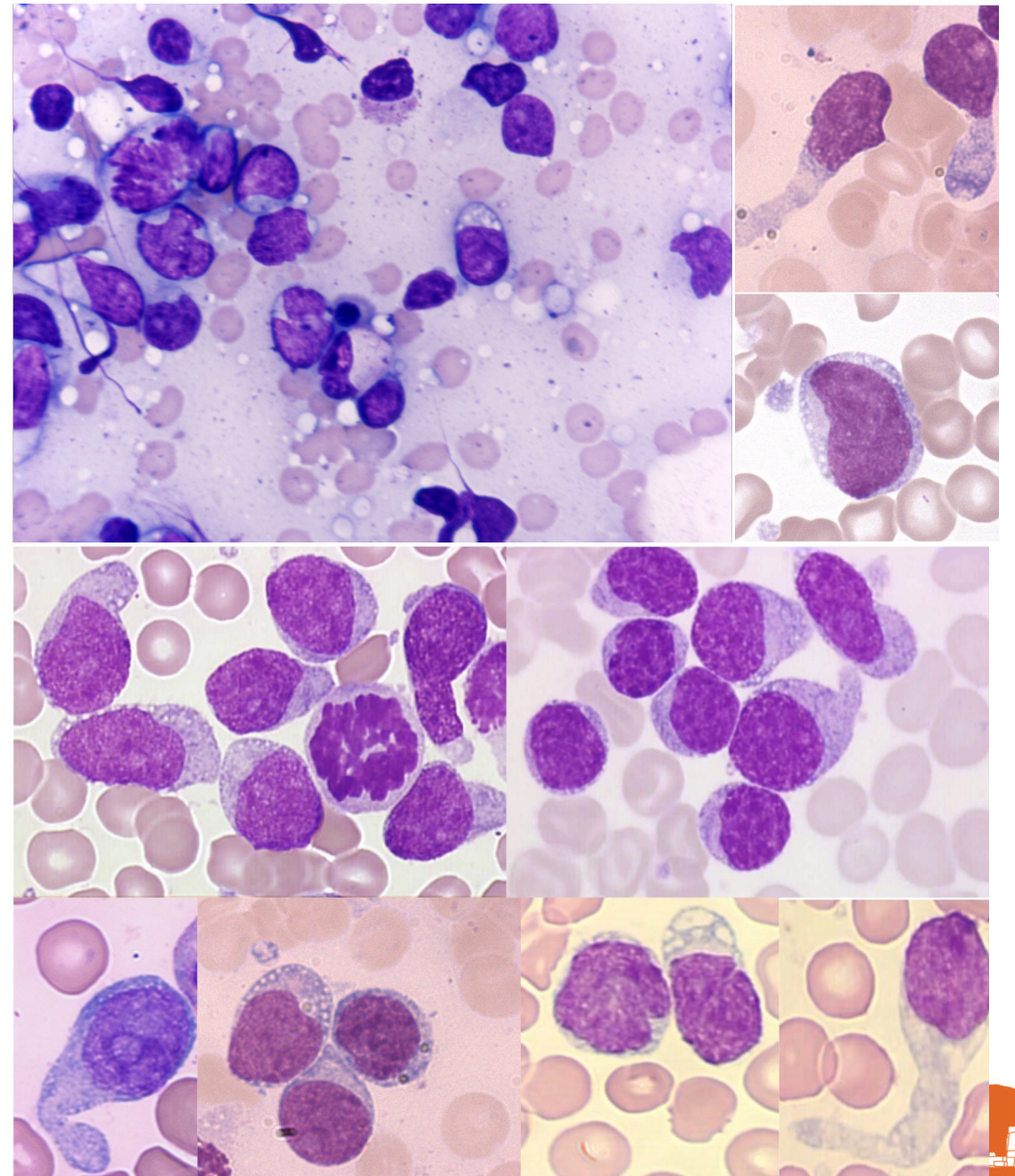
#### BONE MARROW

involvement at onset 50-90% (can be negligible); invariably becomes manifest at progression  
pb 50% (>low blasts number)

Blood/marrow smears:

*blastoid features, cytoplasmic microvacuoles, pseudopodia shaped expansions, lack of granules or crystals*

Dysplastic alteration in the remaining hematopoietic tissues, especially in megakaryocytes



## Coexisting myeloid and BPDC neoplasms

- Isolated or Associated with antecedent or concurrent or following MN : 20-30% of patients
- Chronic MyeloMonocytic Leukaemia, Myeloproliferative Neoplasm, Myelodysplastic neoplasm, rarely Multiple myeloma  
Some may develop BPDCN following cytotoxic therapy for other malignancies;  
Possible presence of clonal haematopoiesis in elderly patients
- Myeloid leukemic cells are phenotypically distinct from blastic plasmacytoid dendritic cell neoplasm tumor cells, but can share CD4 and CD56, as well as TCL1 and CD123, suggesting that the two diseases may have a common origin.



# phenotype

- Specific markers: CD123/CD303/TCL1/TCRF4/CD304; CD4/CD56
- Aberrant markers  
the frequent aberrancies define a high phenotypic heterogeneity; large panel of markers is required particularly if the typical specific markers are absent

CD20/CD79a/CD19/PAX5; CD2/CD3/CD5/CD7/CD4/CD8/CD43; MPO/CD15/CD68/CD163;  
CD34/TdT/CD117/CD99/CD38/CD1a; S100/MUM1/BCL2; BCL6/CD10



**Expected positive expression:**

CD123\* (rare negative reported)

TCF4\* strong uniform

TCL1\*

CD303 \*

CD304\*

CD4

CD56 strong uniform (rare negative;§§)

**Expected negative expression:**

CD3

CD14

CD19

CD34

Lysozyme

Myeloperoxidase

**Immunophenotypic diagnostic criteria:**

- Expression of CD123 and one other pDC marker (\*) in addition to CD4 and/or CD56.

Or

- Expression of any three pDC markers (\*) and absent expression of all expected negative markers

**Commonly positive:** E-cadherin (\*\*), MX1, HLA-DR

Possible : CD2, CD7, CD33, CD36, CD38, CD43, CD45RA, CD79a, *Bcl2*, TdT

**Uncommon:** CD5, CD13, CD22, CD117

S-100 reported in children

**Ki-67** proliferation index high

PD-L1 expression in some cases

**Mostly negative:** *CD68* (possible granular weak staining), CD1a, CD15, CD25, CD34, CD41, CD64, CD113, MNDA

§§ subset of mature reactive pDC are CD56+ (1.2-20%) mostly weaker and partial; Khourny et al. Leukaemia 2022; \*\*Lorenzi 2021AJSP



# Immunohistochemistry

➤ CD56 as only marker used to date to distinguish neoplastic from reactive pDC

But few BDPCN are negative and CD56 expression can be found in a small subset of reactive pDC (challenge in CD56negBDPCN and in assessment in post treatment BM specimens)

➤ *AJSP 2014 Julia F et al.*

BDPCN: clinico-immunohistochemical correlations in a series of 91 patients.

co-expression of CD4, CD56, CD123, CD303, TCL1 only in 46% cases;

4/5 markers could still be reliably made without resorting to any additional stains

➤ *AJSP 2019 Sukswai et al.*

Dual expression of TCF4 and CD123 is a highly sensitive and specific for BDPCN

➤ *AJCP 2023 Wu et al.* (neoplastic vs reactive pDC)

SOX4 positive in neoplastic pDC

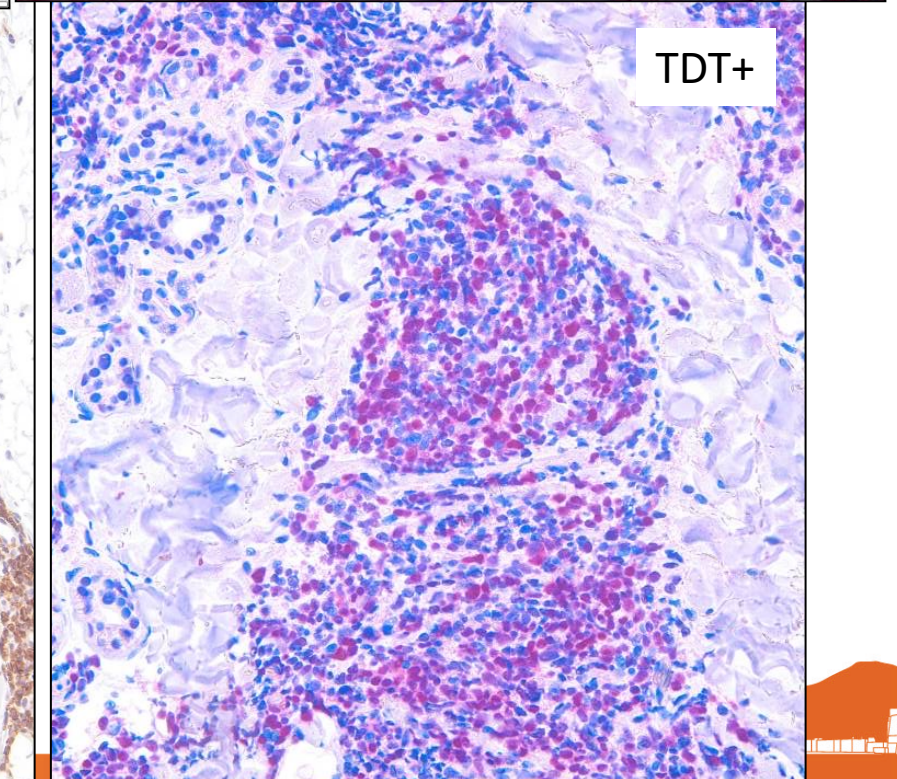
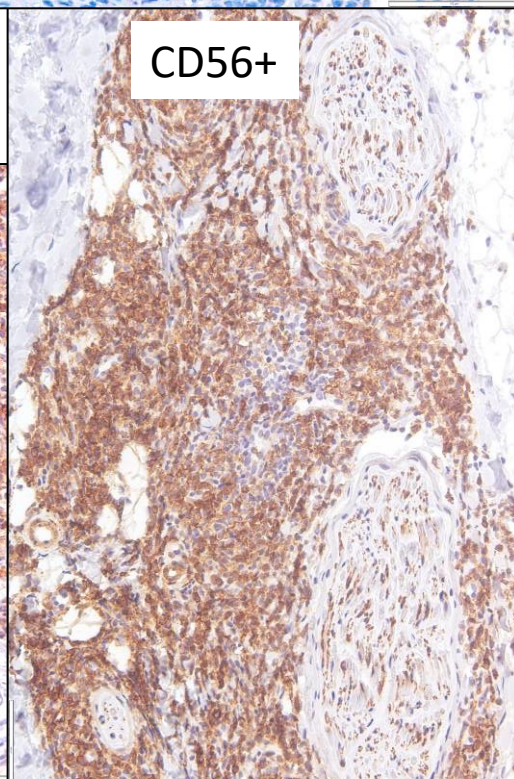
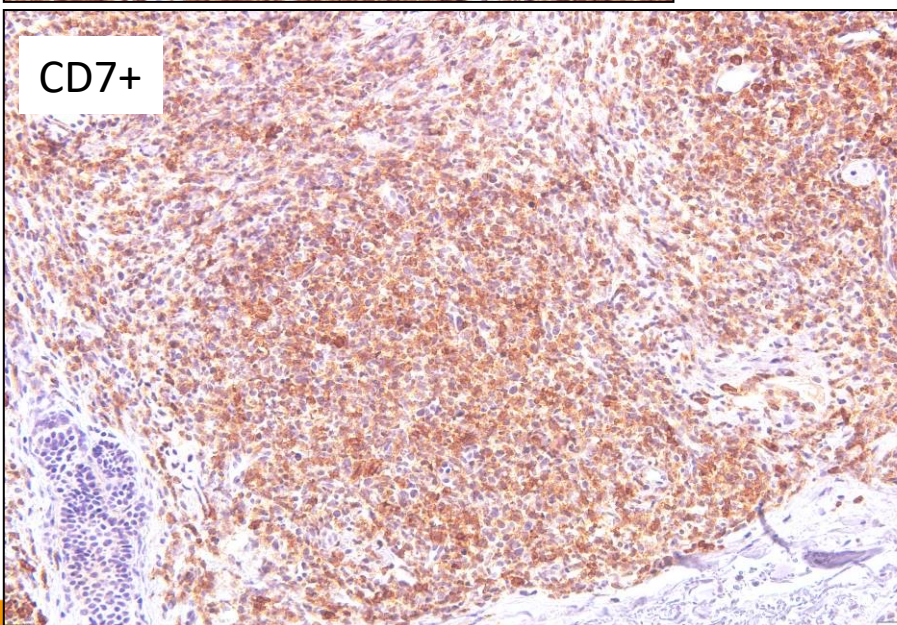
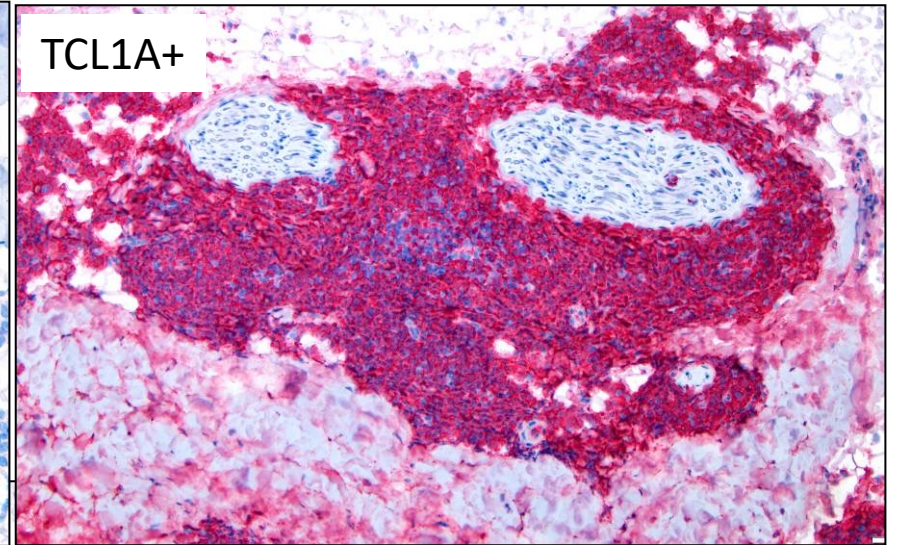
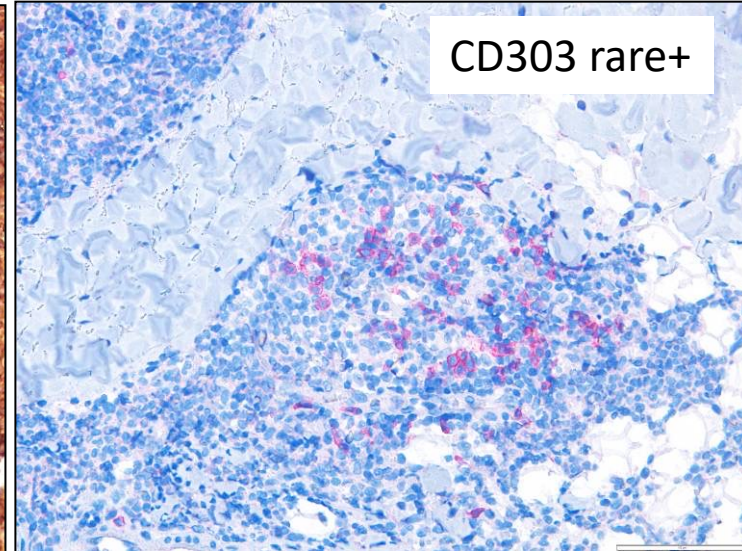
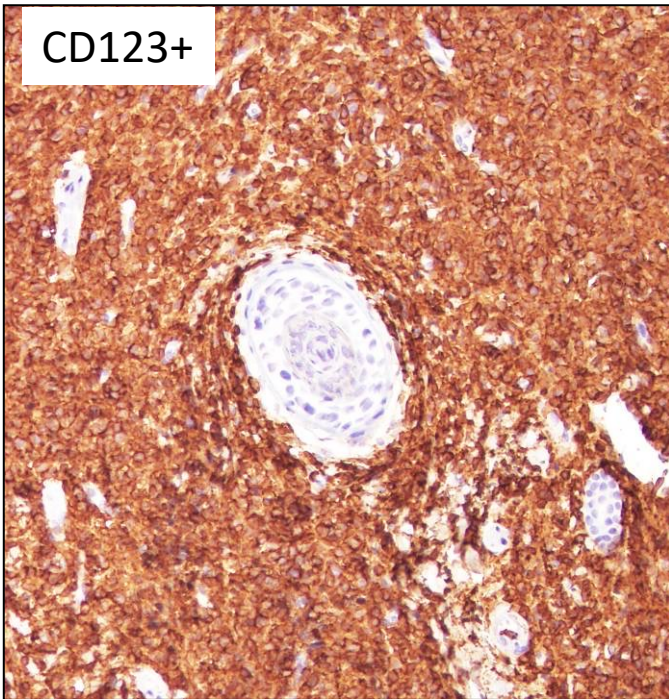
SOX4/CD123 (100% sensitivity; 98% specificity) for BDPCN (against reactive pDC and other neoplasm including CD56negBDPCN

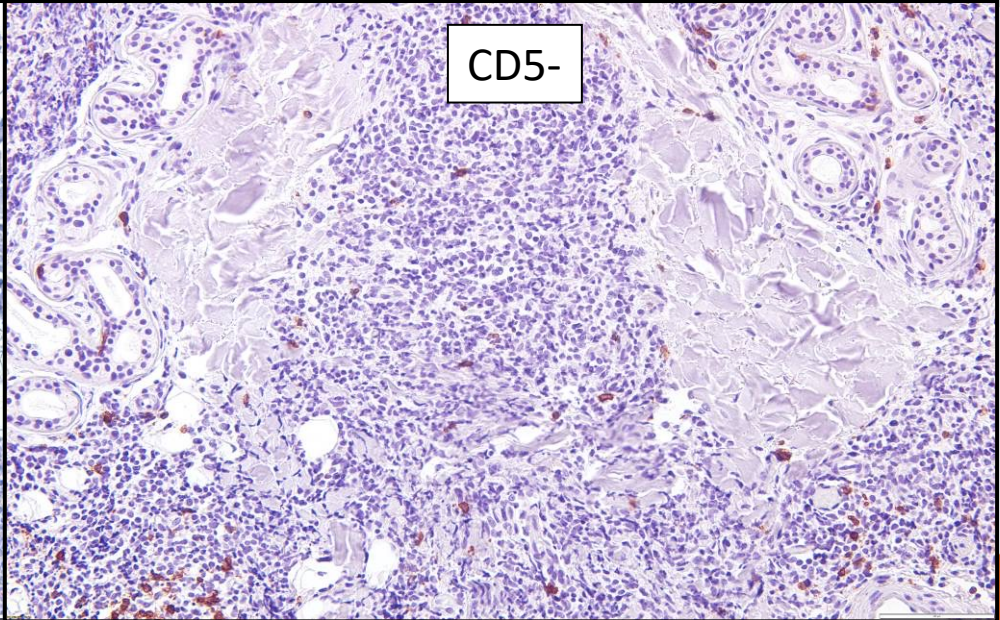
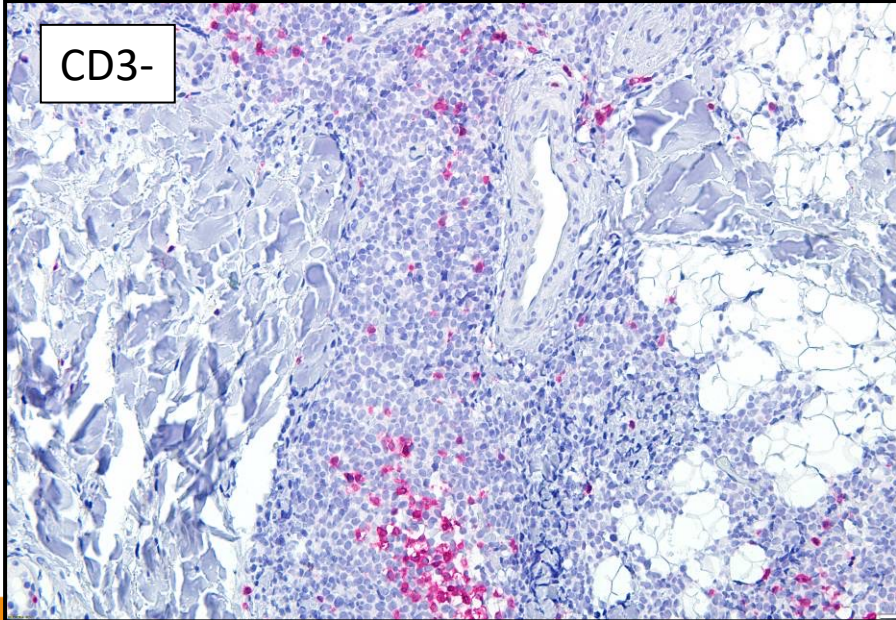
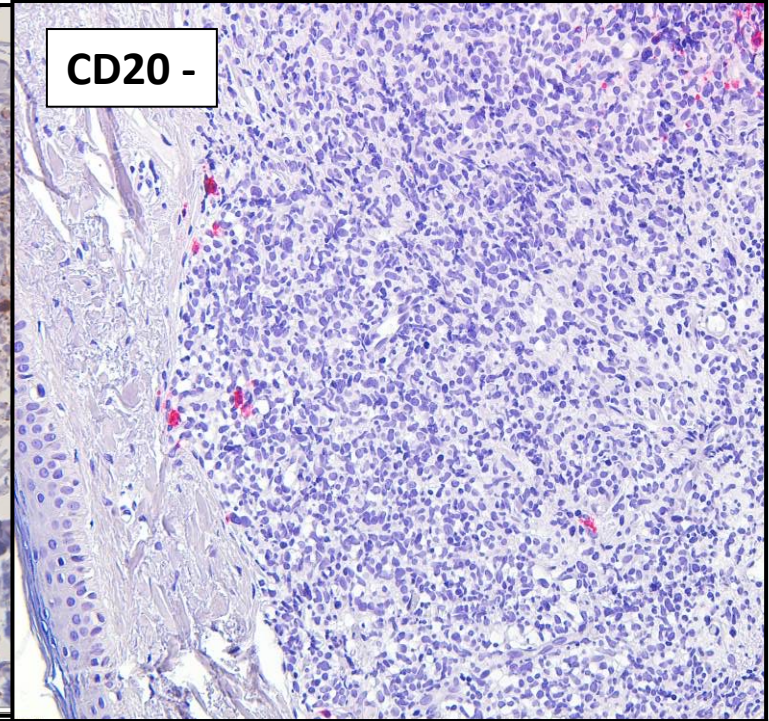
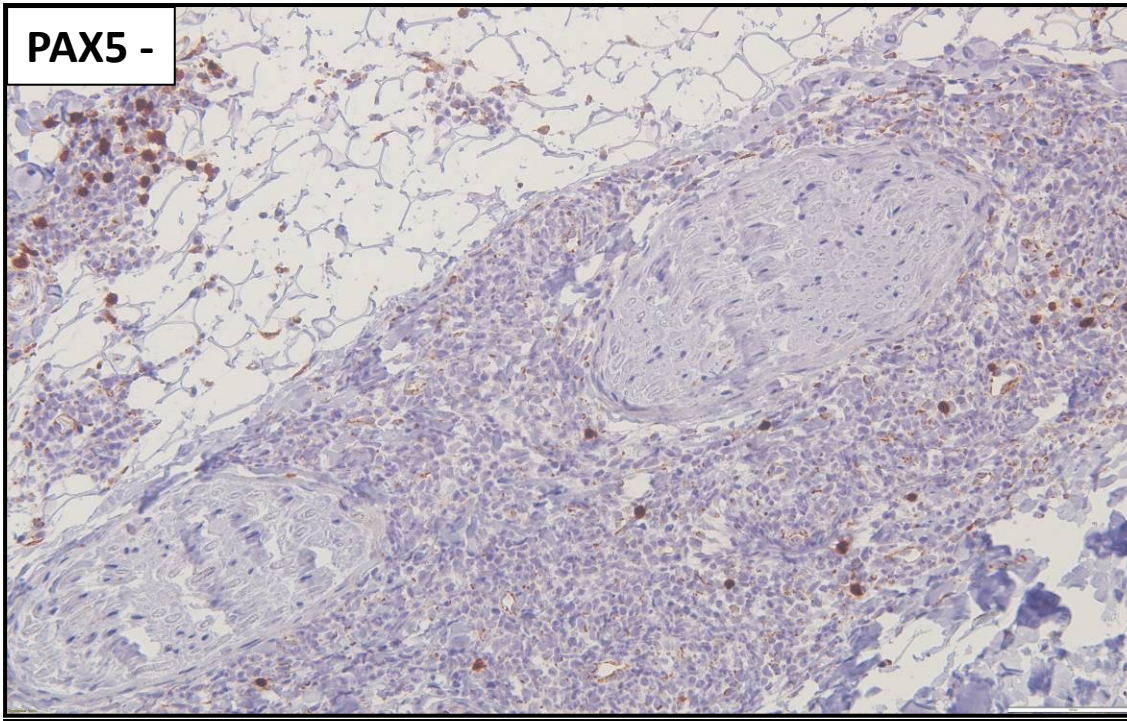
TCF4/CD123

TCF4/CD56+ 96% sensitivity; 100% specificity for BDPCN;

IRF8 non specific; positive in BDPCN, reactive p-DC and other MN

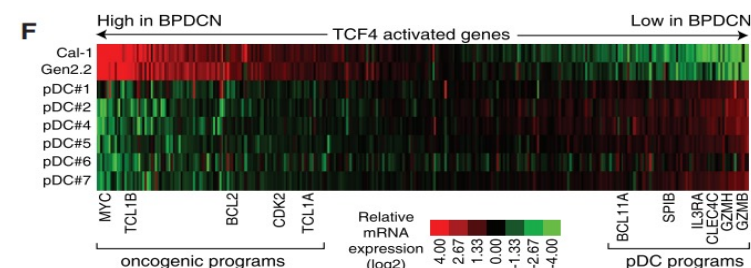




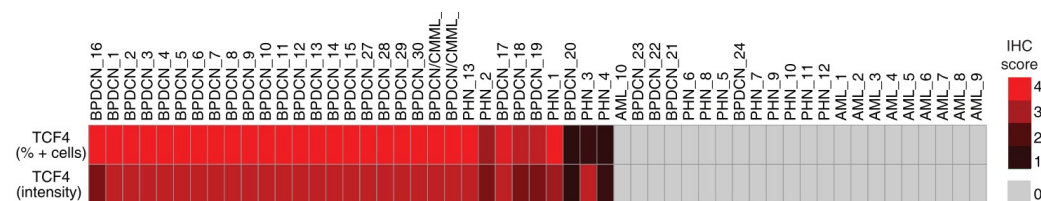


## TCF4/E2-2 role in BDPCN development

- indispensable gene in the regulation of pDC development but also possible driver gene in the transformation of pDCs to BPDCNs and master regulator in BPDCNs
- TCF4 control several genes in the pcDC :  
some are oncogenes BCL2, TCL1A/B, MYC  
*(at higher levels in BPDCNs than in pDCs)*  
some are functional genes: BCL11A, SPIB, IL3RA, CLEC4C  
*(at higher levels in pDCs than in BPDCNs)*
- TCF4-derived change in the gene-signature of BDPCN as opposed to normal/reactive pcDC: the pDC-specific function of TCF4 is impaired in BPDCN
- TCF4 IHC could aid in the differential diagnosis of BPDCN and AML

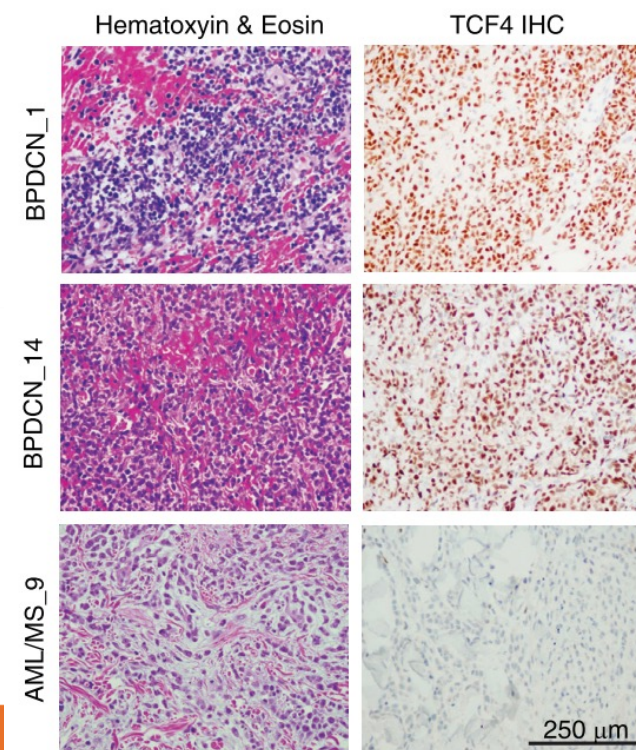


Ceribelli et al.  
Cancer Cell 2016



Ceribelli et al. Cancer Cell 2016

Cisse et al., Cell 2008; Nagasawa et al., 2008; Ghosh et al., 2010; Ippolito et al., 2014; Sasaki et al., 2012; Sawai et al., 2013; Schiavoni et al., 2002; Schotte et al., 2004; Tsujimura et al., 2003; Ceribelli et al. Cancer Cell 2016





>cytogenetic abnormalities; 75%  
complex karyotypes; "gain" >>"loss"

Cheng et al. Current Medical Science 2021

### Chromosomal abnormalities

5q21/5q32 (72%)  
12p13 (64%)  
13q13-21 (64%)  
6q23-ter (50%)  
12q23 (43%)  
9 (28%)

### Epigenetic regulators

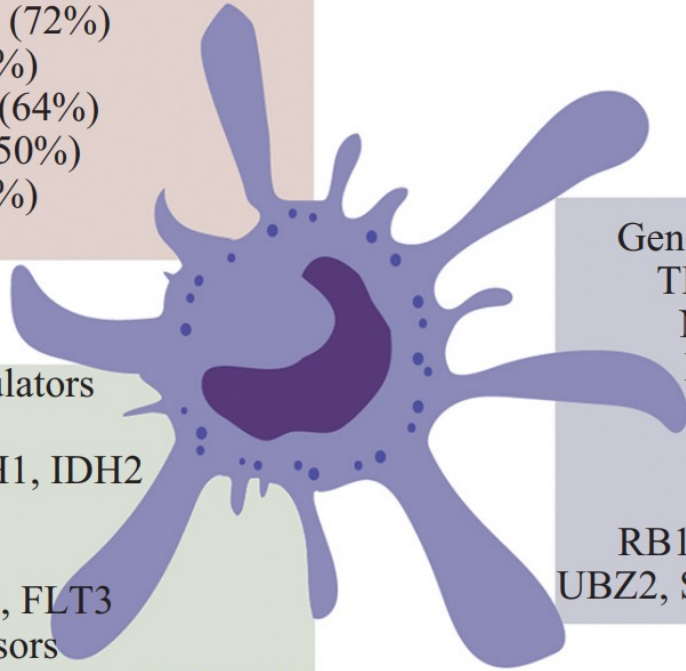
TET2, TET1  
DNMT3A, IDH1, IDH2

### Oncogenes

NRAS, KRAS  
HES6, RUNX2, FLT3

### Tumor suppressors

RB1, TP53, CDKN2A, CDKN1B



### Genetic mutation

TET2, ASXL1  
NRAS, ATM  
IK2F, KRAS  
IDH2, MET  
APC, BRAF  
KIT, MLH1  
RB1, RET, TP53  
UBZ2, SRSF2, VHL

inattivazioni di geni tumore-soppressori (*RB1*, *TP53*, *CDKN2A*, and *CDKN1B*)

attivazioni di oncogeni (*NRAS*, *KRAS*, *HES6*, *RUNX2*, and *FLT3*)

➤rearrangement of *MYC/8q24*: 38%  
balanced translocation *t(6;8)(p21;q24)*  
(immunoblastic morphology)

Rearrangements of *MYB* (20%) and *MYBL1* (1%) >in children

➤monoallelic and biallelic 12p13/ *ETV6* deletions: also  
without detectable disease (early pathogenetic event)

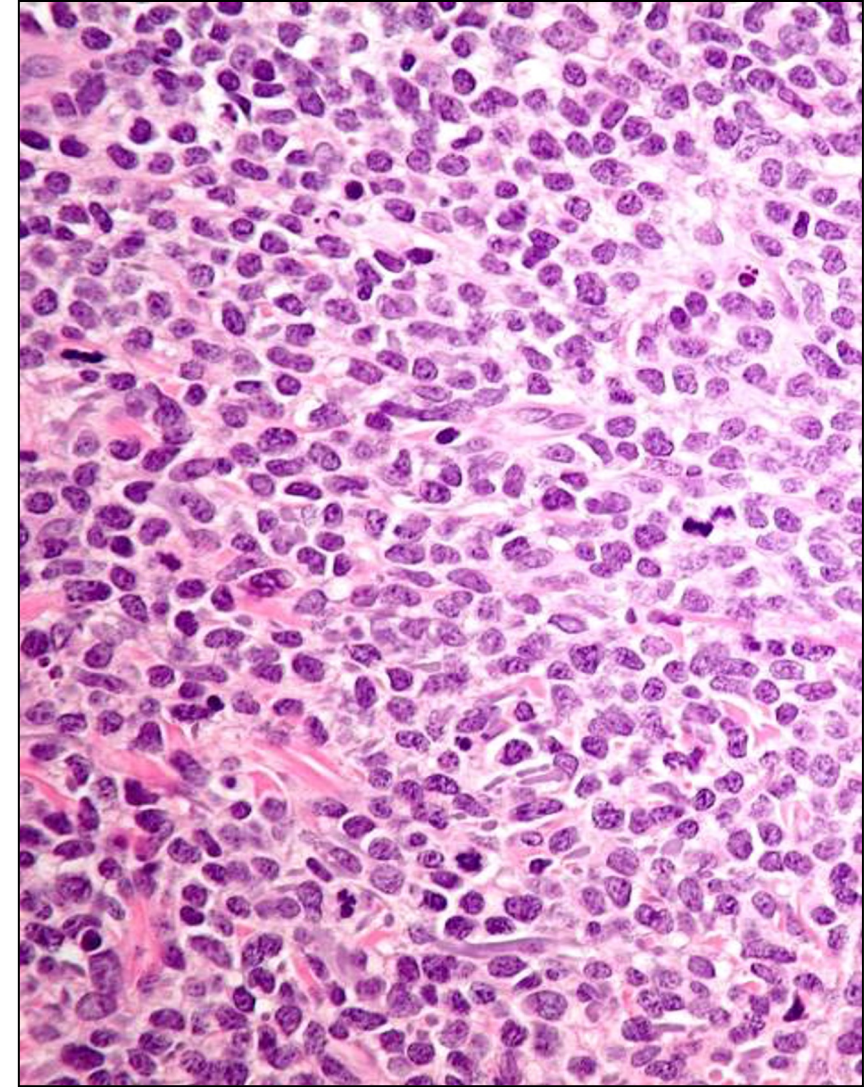
➤*DNMT3A*, *NPM1*, *FLT3* internal tandem duplication  
mutation: uncommon

➤other low frequency events 4q34.1-4q34.2, 9p13.2-  
9p11.2, 9q12- 9q34.3, and 13q12.11-13q31.1

# Differential diagnoses

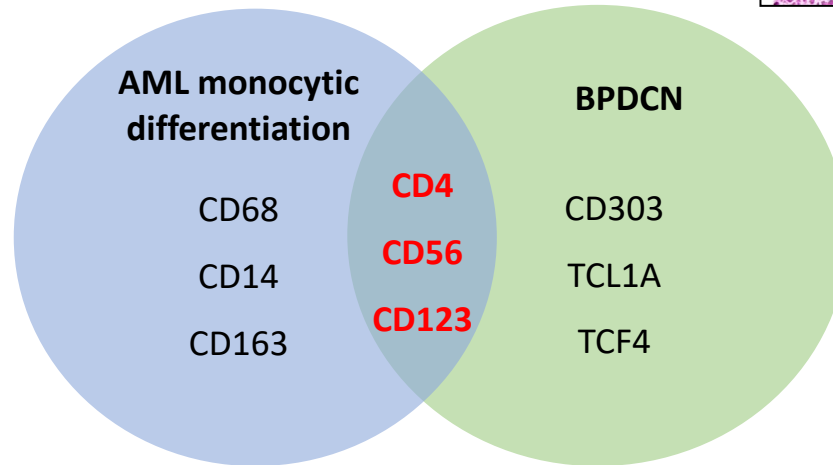
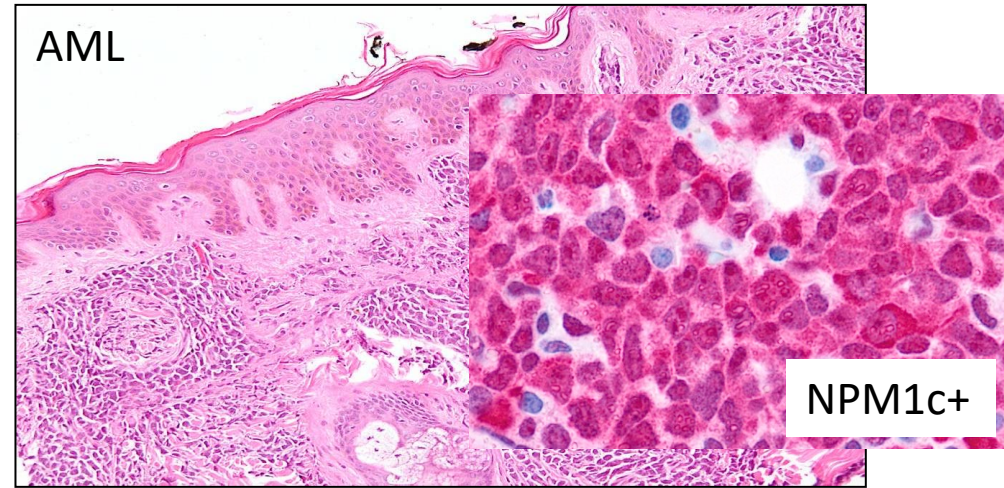
**Blastoid cytology, mitoses, high Ki67: malignant disease**  
(cytology can be misleading in mild infiltrate, but Ki67 should help)

**expression of «haematologic» molecules (CD45)**  
differential diagnosis with haematologic neoplasms  
(myeloid or lymphoid/precursor or peripheral



## (1) AML with pDC-like phenotype

- CD123+/CD4+/CD56+ (pDC-like) phenotype can be observed in AML negative for specific pDC markers (TCF4, CD303, TCL1)
- >AML with myelomonocytic/monocytic differentiation w/wo NPM1 mutation; NPM1 mutated AML with pDC-like phenotype bear worse prognosis AML-Mo/NMP1mut
- can present with skin lesions and is mostly CD34 negative



## (2) AML with mixed/ambiguous phenotype

- Need to express lineage specific marker (CD3/CD19) and MPO, which must be negative in BPDCN

## (3) B- or T- precursor leukaemia/lymphoma

- For the possible expression of TdT and T/B associated markers and lack of specific myeloid antigens/CD34



#### (4) MN with pDC differentiation (pDC-AML)

3-5% AML; pDC confers worse prognosis; *no skin lesions*  
clonally expanded pDCs (pDC-AML) and related with the AML blasts

70% in association with AML with **RUNX1 mutations** (remaining: RUNX1-wild type, TP53mut; CD2pos); DNMT3A, BCOR,FLT3 mutations; TET2 rare

Predominant **AML (blasts)** usually with **immature phenotype (CD34/TdT/HLA-DR, CD117pos)**; more rarely with myelomonocytic differentiation; negative pDC markers (*possible CD123*)

+

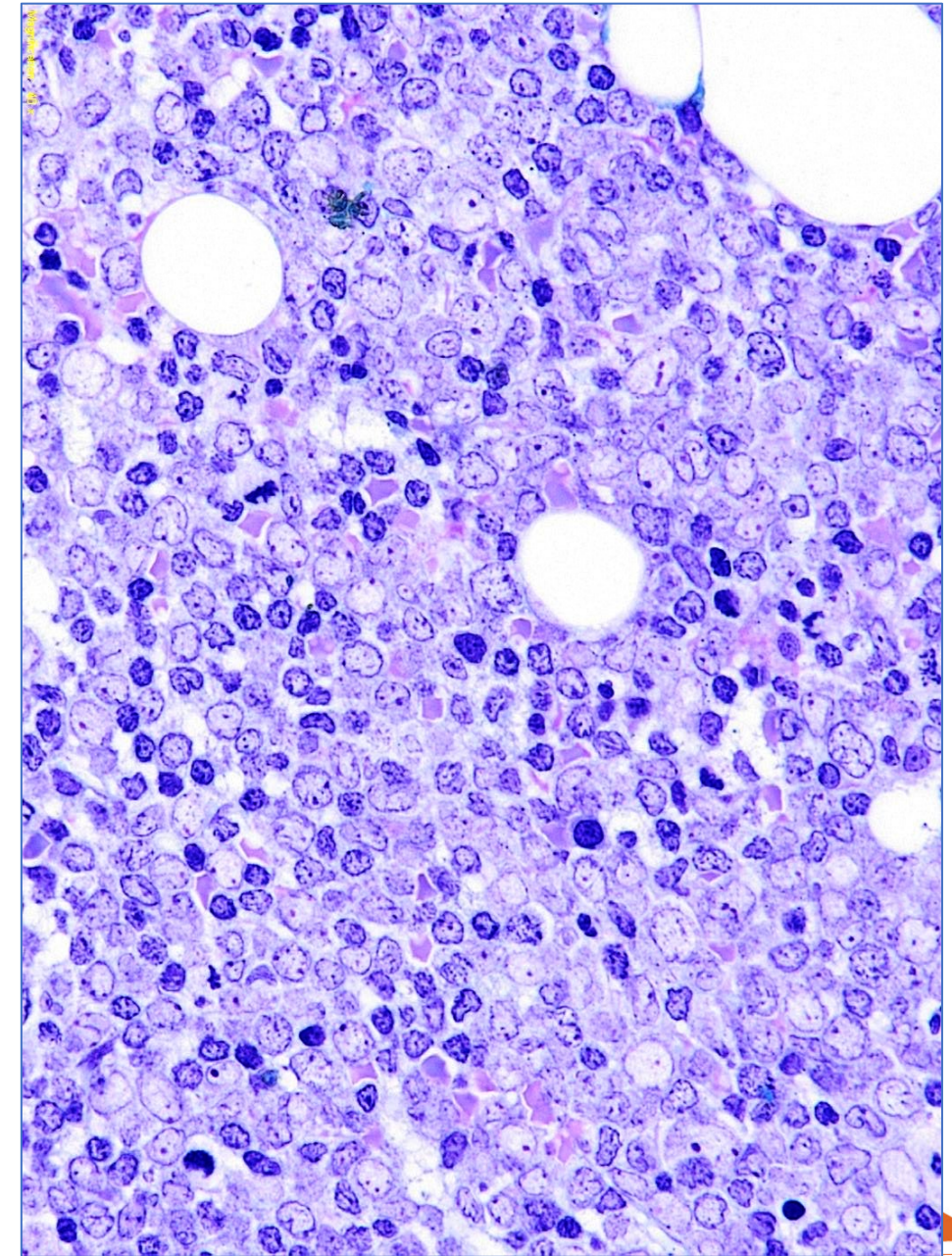
**Minority** (6.6% of all leukaemic cells) of **pDC** morphologically “**mature/mildly blastoid**”; interstitial, *no nodular aggregation*, clonally related to leukaemic blasts [spectrum from early immature pDCs (CD34+, CD303 dim/-) to mature pDCs (CD34-, CD303+)]; CD123+, T markers +/- **>negative CD56/TCL1**

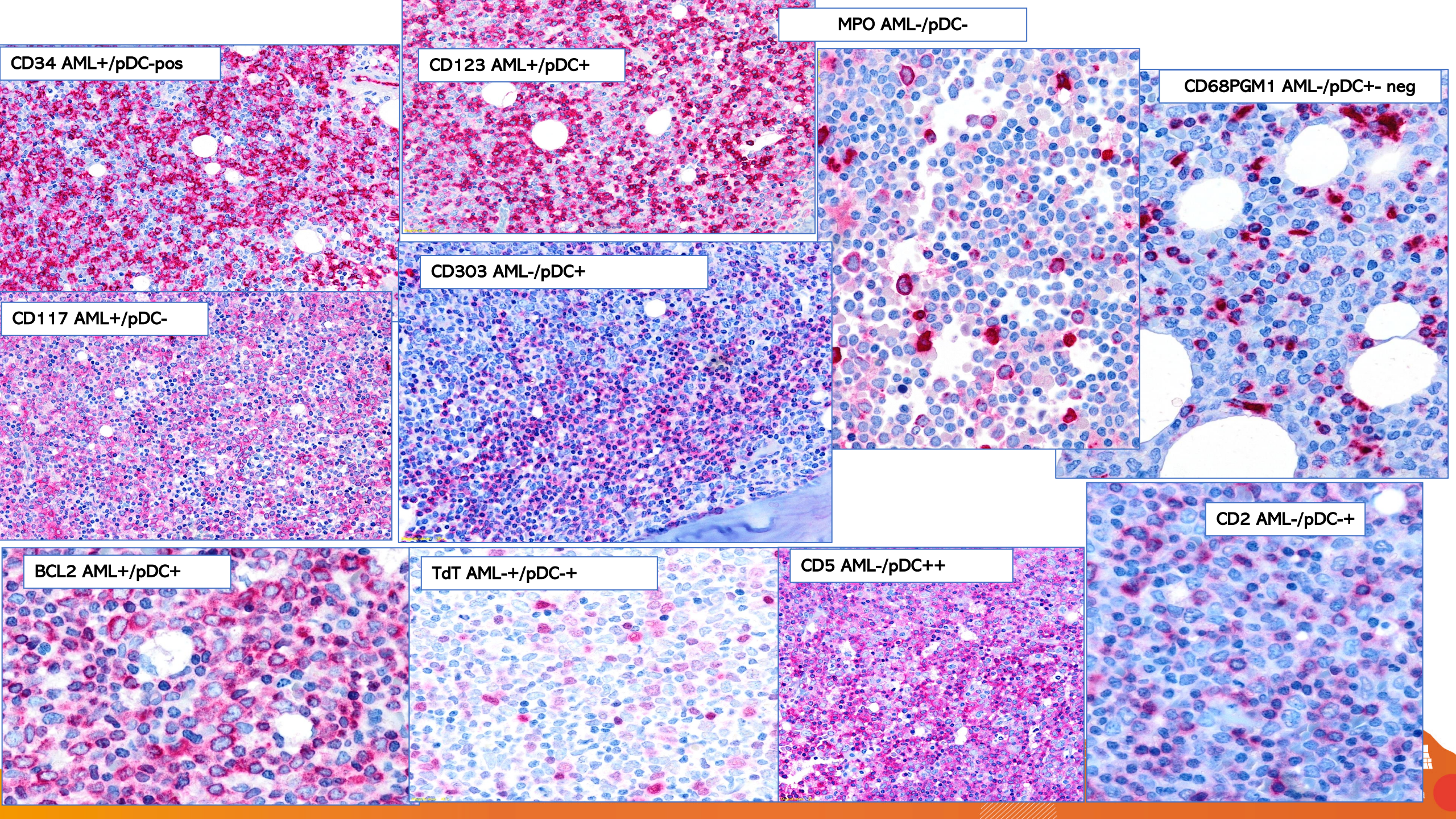
DD BDPCN

CD34-/TCL1+/CD56+;

skin lesions;

RUNX1 mutations very rare; > TET2 mutations





MPO AML-/pDC-

CD123 AML+/pDC+

CD68PGM1 AML-/pDC+- neg

CD34 AML+/pDC-pos

CD303 AML-/pDC+

CD117 AML+/pDC-

BCL2 AML+/pDC+

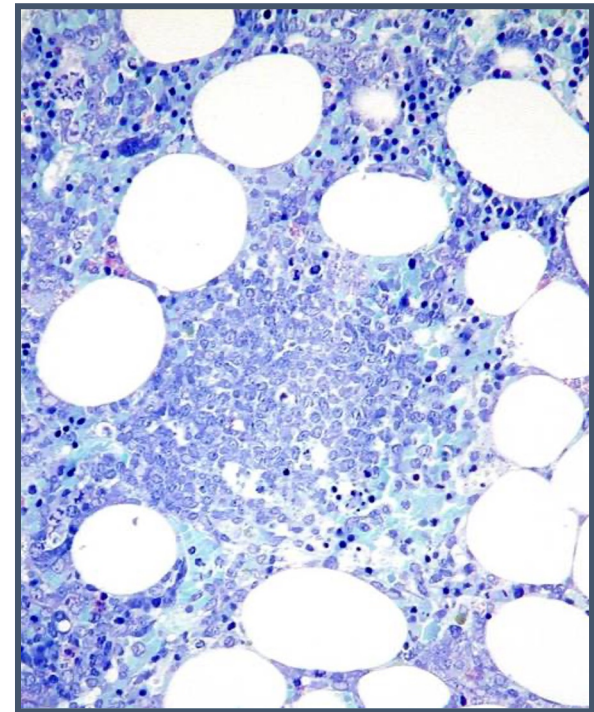
TdT AML-+/pDC-

CD5 AML-/pDC++

CD2 AML-/pDC+

## (5) Myeloid Neoplasm associated with proliferation of mature pDC

- predominantly male, the median age is 69-72 year
- Associated with MN: chronic myelomonocytic leukaemia (CMML) most frequently (>in RAS mutCMML; increased number of pDC correlate with higher risk of leukaemic transformation also AML (4.9%), MDS, MPN
- Reported to be clonally related to the underlying MN
- Cytologically **bland looking/not blastic; in aggregates** in bone marrow, skin (clusters surrounding vessels or adnexa, in the upper dermis with abundant T cells) or more rarely in lymph nodes
- Mature phenotype: CD123, TCF4, CD2AP, SPIB, CD303, CD304 and MX1.
  - **Aberrant loss of markers expressed on normal pDCs** (e.g., CD303 and TCL1): desirable
  - **Absence/low partial expression of CD56** (mostly weak; usually neg)
  - Possible rare TdT**Ki-67 low**
- Presence of mature pDC can add additional therapeutic targets (immunomodulatory drugs, lenalidomide, anti –CD123)



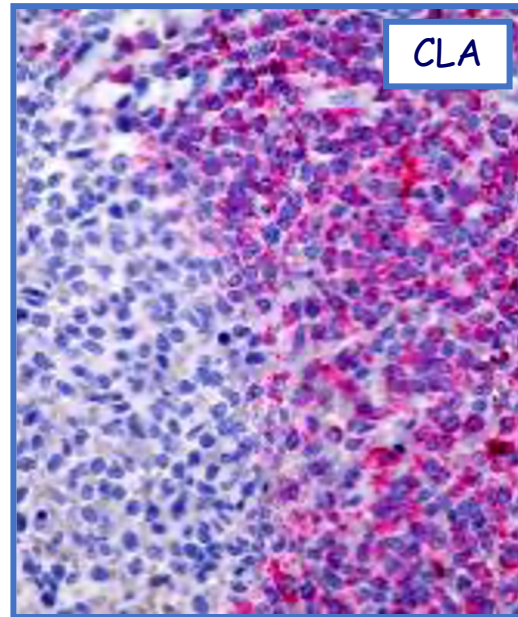
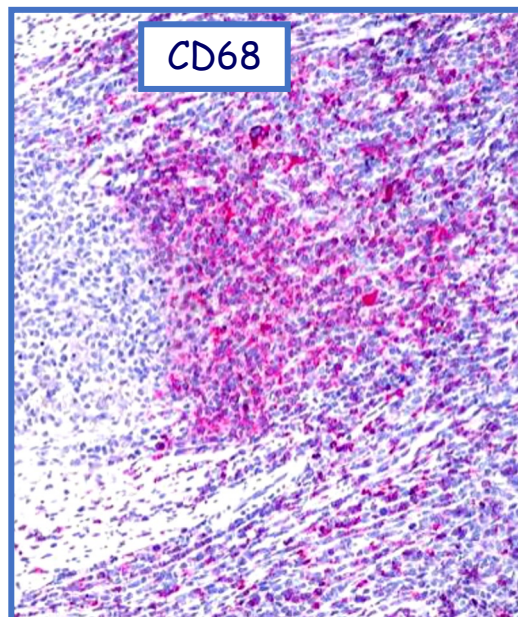
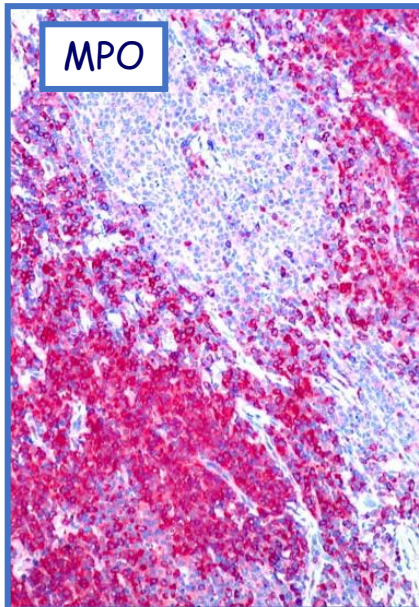
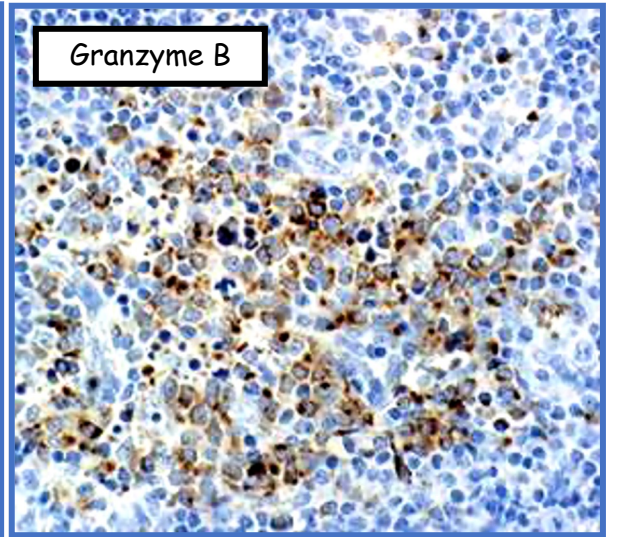
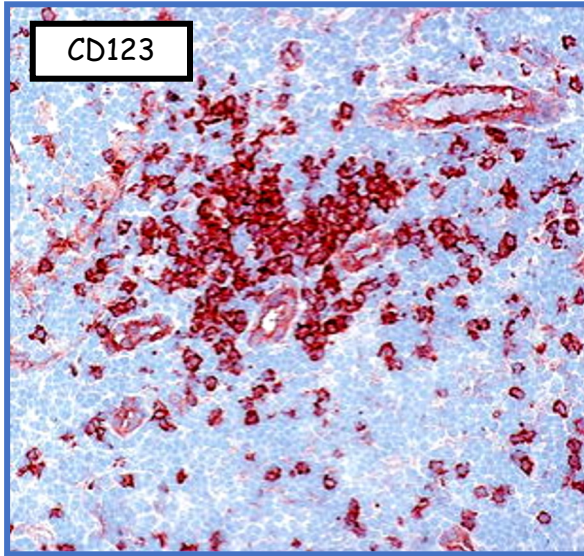
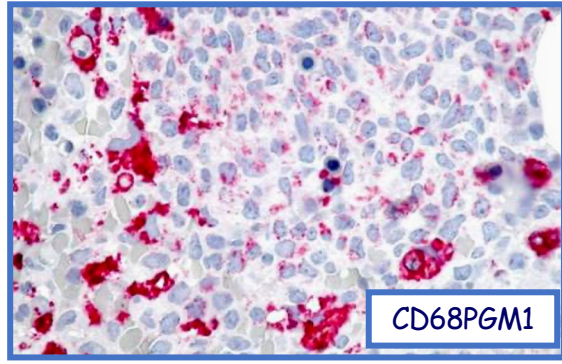
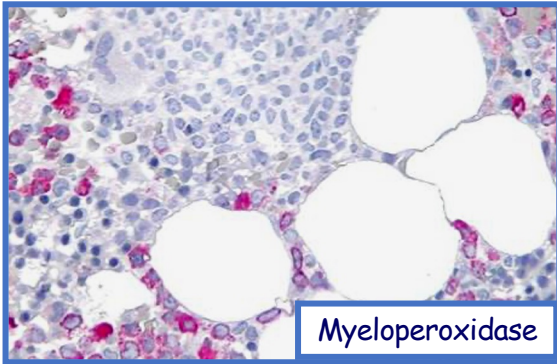
*WHO 2022*

*Desirable:*

Aberrant pDC

immunophenotype

Absence or low/partial  
expression of CD56



intestinal MS (inv16) Pileri 2007



BPDCN is rare and awareness needs to be raised

- In skin  
consider BPDCN in  
cytologically blastic/blastoid neoplasm, with mitoses/high Ki67  
expression of «haematologic» molecules (CD45)  
(when considering any type of HN)  
In bone marrow
- Apply wide panel of markers  
including at least specific markers + expected negative markers  
(CD68PGM1 and Bcl2 are also suggested)
- remember that CD123+/CD4+/CD56+ is not sufficient for a BPDCN  
and few BPDCN can be CD56 negative
- In case no full panel of markers is available do not sign out for «any-type AML» but highlight the  
possibility of a BPDCN and ask/suggest for second opinion

