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(54) Title: IMMUNE REGULATORY OLIGONUCLEOTIDE (IRO) COMPOUNDS TO MODULATE TOLL-LIKE RECEPTOR BASED IMMUNE RESPONSE

(57) Abstract: The invention provides novel immune regulatory oligonucleotides (IRO) as antagonist of TLRs and methods of use thereof. These IROs have unique sequences that inhibit or suppress TLR-mediated signaling in response to a TLR ligand or TLR agonist. The methods may have use in the prevention and treatment of cancer, an autoimmune disorder, airway inflammation, inflammatory disorders, infectious disease, skin disorders, allergy, asthma or a disease caused by a pathogen.



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**IMMUNE REGULATORY OLIGONUCLEOTIDE (IRO) COMPOUNDS TO
MODULATE TOLL-LIKE RECEPTOR BASED IMMUNE RESPONSE**
(Attorney Docket No. IDR-036PC)

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/726,034, filed on October 12, 2005; U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/784,243, filed on March 21, 2006; and U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/825,440, filed on September 13, 2006, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference in their entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the invention

[0002] The invention generally relates to the field of immunology and immunotherapy, and more specifically to immune regulatory oligonucleotide (IRO) compositions and their use for inhibition and/or suppression of Toll-like Receptor-mediated immune responses.

Summary of the related art

[0003] Toll-like receptors (TLRs) are present on many cells of the immune system and have been shown to be involved in the innate immune response (Hornung, V. et al., (2002) J. Immunol. 168:4531-4537). In vertebrates, this family consists of ten proteins called TLR1 to TLR10, which are known to recognize pathogen associated molecular patterns from bacteria, fungi, parasites, and viruses (Poltorak, a. et al. (1998) Science 282:2085-2088; Underhill, D.M., et al. (1999) Nature 401:811-815; Hayashi, F. et. al (2001) Nature 410:1099-1103; Zhang, D. et al. (2004) Science 303:1522-1526; Meier, A. et al. (2003) Cell. Microbiol. 5:561-570; Campos, M.A. et al. (2001) J. Immunol. 167: 416-423; Hoebe, K. et al. (2003) Nature 424: 743-748; Lund, J. (2003) J. Exp. Med. 198:513-520; Heil, F. et al. (2004) Science 303:1526-1529; Diebold, S.S., et al. (2004) Science 303:1529-1531; Hornung, V. et al. (2004) J. Immunol. 173:5935-5943). TLRs are a key means by which mammals recognize and mount an immune response to foreign molecules and also provide a means by which the innate and adaptive immune responses are linked (Akira, S. et al. (2001) Nature Immunol. 2:675-680; Medzhitov, R. (2001) Nature Rev. Immunol. 1:135-145). TLRs have also been shown to play a role in the pathogenesis of many diseases, including

autoimmunity, infectious disease, and inflammation (Cook, D.N. et al. (2004) *Nature Immunol.* 5:975-979) and the regulation of TLR-mediated activation using appropriate agents may provide a means for disease intervention.

[0004] Some TLRs are located on the cell surface to detect and initiate a response to extracellular pathogens and other TLRs are located inside the cell to detect and initiate a response to intracellular pathogens. Table 1 provides a representation of TLRs and the known agonists therefore (Diebold, S.S. et al. (2004) *Science* 303:1529-1531; Liew, F. et al. (2005) *Nature* 5:446-458; Hemmi H et al. (2002) *Nat Immunol* 3:196-200; Jurk M et al., (2002) *Nat Immunol* 3:499; Lee J et al. (2003) *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA* 100:6646-6651); (Alexopoulou, L. (2001) *Nature* 413:732-738).

Table 1:

TLR Molecule	Agonist
Cell Surface TLRs:	
TLR2	bacterial lipopeptides
TLR4	gram negative bacteria
TLR5	motile bacteria
TLR6	gram positive bacteria
Endosomal TLRs:	
TLR3	double stranded RNA viruses
TLR7	single stranded RNA viruses
TLR8	single stranded RNA viruses
TLR9	unmethylated DNA

[0005] Certain unmethylated CpG motifs present in bacterial and synthetic DNA have been shown to activate the immune system and induce antitumor activity. (Tokunaga T et al., *J. Natl. Cancer Inst.* (1984) 72:955-962; Shimada S, et al., *Jpn. H cancer Res*, 1986, 77, 808-816; Yamamoto S, et al., *Jpn. J. Cancer Res.*, 1986, 79, 866-73). Other studies using antisense oligonucleotides containing CpG dinucleotides have been shown to stimulate immune responses (Zhao Q, et al. (1996) *Biochem.Pharmacol.* 26:173-182). Subsequent studies demonstrated that TLR9 recognizes unmethylated CpG motifs present in bacterial and synthetic DNA (Hemmi, H. et al. (2000) *Nature* 408:740-745). Other modifications of CpG-containing

phosphorothioate oligonucleotides can also affect their ability to act as modulators of immune response through TLR9 (see, e.g., Zhao et al., *Biochem. Pharmacol.* (1996) 51:173-182; Zhao et al. (1996) *Biochem Pharmacol.* 52:1537-1544; Zhao et al. (1997) *Antisense Nucleic Acid Drug Dev.* 7:495-502; Zhao et al (1999) *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* 9:3453-3458; Zhao et al. (2000) *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* 10:1051-1054; Yu, D. et al. (2000) *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* 10:2585-2588; Yu, D. et al. (2001) *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* 11:2263-2267; and Kandimalla, E. et al. (2001) *Bioorg. Med. Chem.* 9:807-813). In addition, structure activity relationship studies have allowed identification of synthetic motifs and novel DNA-based compounds that induce specific immune response profiles that are distinct from those resulting from unmethylated CpG dinucleotides. (Kandimalla, E. et al. (2005) *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U S A* 102:6925-6930. Kandimalla, E. et al. (2003) *Proc. Nat. Acad. Sci. U S A* 100:14303-14308; Cong, Y. et al. (2003) *Biochem Biophys Res. Commun.* 310:1133-1139; Kandimalla, E. et al. (2003) *Biochem. Biophys. Res. Commun.* 306:948-953; Kandimalla, E. et al. (2003) *Nucleic Acids Res.* 31:2393-2400; Yu, D. et al. (2003) *Bioorg. Med. Chem.* 11:459-464; Bhagat, L. et al. (2003) *Biochem. Biophys. Res. Commun.* 300:853-861; Yu, D. et al. (2002) *Nucleic Acids Res.* 30:4460-4469; Yu, D. et al. (2002) *J. Med. Chem.* 45:4540-4548; Yu, D. et al. (2002) *Biochem. Biophys. Res. Commun.* 297:83-90; Kandimalla, E. et al. (2002) *Bioconj. Chem.* 13:966-974; Yu, D. et al. (2002) *Nucleic Acids Res.* 30:1613-1619; Yu, D. et al. (2001) *Bioorg. Med. Chem.* 9:2803-2808; Yu, D. et al. (2001) *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* 11:2263-2267; Kandimalla, E. et al. (2001) *Bioorg. Med. Chem.* 9:807-813; Yu, D. et al. (2000) *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* 10:2585-2588; Putta, M. et al. (2006) *Nucleic Acids Res.* 34:3231-3238).

[0006] The selective localization of TLRs and the signaling generated therefrom, provides some insight into their role in the immune response. The immune response involves both an innate and an adaptive response based upon the subset of cells involved in the response. For example, the T helper (Th) cells involved in classical cell-mediated functions such as delayed-type hypersensitivity and activation of cytotoxic T lymphocytes (CTLs) are Th1 cells. This response is the body's innate response to antigen (e.g. viral infections, intracellular pathogens, and tumor cells), and results in a secretion of IFN-gamma and a concomitant activation of CTLs. Alternatively, the Th cells involved as helper cells for B-cell activation are Th2 cells. Th2 cells have been shown to be activated in response to bacteria and parasites and

may mediate the body's adaptive immune response (e.g. IgE production and eosinophil activation) through the secretion of IL-4 and IL-5. The type of immune response is influenced by the cytokines produced in response to antigen exposure and the differences in the cytokines secreted by Th1 and Th2 cells may be the result of the different biological functions of these two subsets.

[0007] While activation of TLRs is involved in mounting an immune response, an uncontrolled stimulation of the immune system through TLRs may exacerbate certain diseases in immune compromised subjects. In recent years, several groups have shown the use of synthetic oligodeoxyoligonucleotides (ODNs) as inhibitors of inflammatory cytokines (Lenert, P. et al. (2003) DNA Cell Biol. 22(10):621-631).

[0008] Using certain synthetic ODNs, Lenert et al. report the ability to produce inhibitory ODNs (Lenert, P. et al. (2003) DNA Cell Biol. 22(10):621-631). These inhibitory ODN require two triplet sequences, a proximal "CCT" triplet and a distal "GGG" triplet. In addition to these triplet-containing inhibitory ODNs, several groups have reported other specific DNA sequences that could inhibit TLR-9-mediated activation by CpG-containing ODNs. These "inhibitory" or "suppressive" motifs are rich in poly "G" (e.g. "GGGG") or "GC" sequences, tend to be methylated, and are present in the DNA of mammals and certain viruses (see e.g.,; Chen, Y., et al., Gene Ther. 8: 1024-1032 (2001); Stunz, L.L., Eur. J. Immunol. 32: 1212-1222 (2002). Duramad, O., et al., J. Immunol., 174: 5193-5200 (2005) and Jurk et. al (US 2005/0239733), describe a structure for inhibitory DNA oligonucleotides containing a GGGG motif within the sequences. Patole et al. demonstrate that GGGG containing ODNs will suppress systemic lupus (Patole, P. et al. (2005) J. Am. Soc. Nephrol. 16:3273-3280). Additionally, Gursel, I., et al., J. Immunol., 171: 1393-1400 (2003), describe repetitive TTAGGG elements, which are present at high frequency in mammalian telomeres, down-regulate CpG-induced immune activation. Shirota, H., et al., J. Immunol., 173: 5002-5007 (2004), demonstrate that synthetic oligonucleotides containing the TTAGGG element mimic this activity and could be effective in the prevention/treatment of certain Th1-dependent autoimmune diseases.

[0009] In contrast, recent studies have called into question the view that poly G containing ODNs are acting as antagonists of TLRs. For example, US 6,426,334, Agrawal et al., demonstrate that administering CpG oligonucleotides containing

GGGG strings have potent antiviral and anticancer activity, and further that administration of these compounds will cause an increase in serum IL-12 concentration. Further, CpG oligos containing polyG sequences are known to induce immune responses through TLR9 activation (Verthelyi D et al, J Immunol. 166, 2372, 2001; Gursel M et al, J Leukoc Biol, 71, 813, 2001, Krug A et al, Eur J Immunol, 31, 2154, 2001) and show antitumor, antiviral activities (Ballas GK et al, J Immunol, 167, 4878, 2001; Verthelyi D et al, J Immunol, 170, 4717, 2003). In addition, polyG oligonucleotides are also known to inhibit HIV and Rel A (McShan WM, et al, J Biol Chem., 267(8):5712-21, 1992; Rando, RF et al., J Biol Chem, 270(4):1754-60, 1995; Benimetskaya L, et al., Nucleic Acids Res., 25(13):2648-56, 1997). In addition, ODNs containing an immune stimulatory CpG motif and 4 consecutive G nucleotides (class A ODNs) induce interferon- γ production and a Th1 shift in the immune response. Moreover, in preclinical disease models, Class A ODN have been shown to induce a TLR-mediated immune response.

[0010] In addition, oligonucleotides containing guanosine strings have been shown to form tetraplex structures, act as aptamers and inhibit thrombin activity (Bock LC et al., Nature, 355:564-6, 1992; Padmanabhan, K et al., J Biol Chem., 268(24):17651-4, 1993). Thus it is not clear whether single-stranded or multiple-stranded structures are effective at suppressing TLR9 activation.

[0011] Thus, there is a need for effective antagonist of TLRs without a concern that they will form secondary structures.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0012] The invention provides novel immune regulatory oligonucleotides (IRO) compounds as antagonists of TLRs and methods of use thereof. These IROs have one or more chemical modifications in the sequence flanking an immune stimulatory motif and/or in an oligonucleotide motif that would be immune stimulatory but for the modification.

[0013] The invention further provides novel IRO compositions having the structure $5\text{-N}_m\text{-N}_3\text{N}_2\text{N}_1\text{CGN}^1\text{N}^2\text{N}^3\text{-N}^m\text{-3'}$, wherein CG is an oligonucleotide motif and C is cytosine or a pyrimidine nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linkage, and G is guanosine a purine nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linkage; N1-N3, at each occurrence, is independently a nucleotide, nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linkage; Nm, at each occurrence, is independently a nucleotide, nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linkage; provided that at least one N1 to N3 and/or C and/or G is a nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linkage; and further provided that compound contains less than 4 consecutive guanosine nucleotides wherein the oligonucleotide motif would be immune stimulatory but for the nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linkage; and wherein m is a number from 0 to about 30.

[0014] The invention further provides for a pharmaceutical composition comprising any an IRO and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

[0015] The invention provides for a method for modifying a TLR-stimulating oligonucleotide comprising an immune stimulatory oligonucleotide motif comprising incorporating chemical modifications into the immune stimulatory oligonucleotide motif and/or to the sequence flanking the immune stimulatory oligonucleotide motif, wherein the immune stimulatory activity of the immune stimulatory oligonucleotide motif is suppressed by the chemical modifications.

[0016] The invention further provides a method for inhibiting a TLR-mediated immune response in a vertebrate, the method comprising administering to the vertebrate an IRO compound in a pharmaceutically effective amount, wherein the route of administration is parenteral, mucosal delivery, oral, sublingual, transdermal, topical, inhalation, intranasal, aerosol, intraocular, intratracheal, intrarectal, vaginal, by gene gun, dermal patch or in eye drop or mouthwash form. In some preferred embodiments, inhibiting TLR stimulation comprising administering an IRO

compound according to the invention, wherein the TLR is selected from TLR2, TLR3, TLR4, TLR5, TLR7, TLR8, and TLR9.

[0017] The invention further provides a method for inhibiting the activity of a TLR agonist comprising administering an IRO compound, wherein the IRO is administered at the same time, prior to or after the TLR agonist. In preferred embodiments the TLR agonist is selected from an agonist of TLR2, TLR3, TLR4, TLR5, TLR7, TLR8, and TLR9.

[0018] The invention further provides a method for therapeutically treating a vertebrate having a disease mediated by a TLR, such method comprising administering to the vertebrate an IRO compound according to the invention in a pharmaceutically effective amount. In preferred embodiments, the disease is cancer, an autoimmune disorder, airway inflammation, inflammatory disorders, infectious disease, skin disorders, allergy, asthma or a disease caused by a pathogen.

[0019] In some preferred embodiments, the IRO compound is administered in combination with one or more vaccines, antigens, antibodies, cytotoxic agents, allergens, antibiotics, antisense oligonucleotides, TLR agonists, TLR antagonists, peptides, proteins, gene therapy vectors, DNA vaccines, adjuvants or co-stimulatory molecules. In some preferred embodiments, the route of administration is parenteral, mucosal delivery, oral, sublingual, transdermal, topical, inhalation, intranasal, aerosol, intraocular, intratracheal, intrarectal, vaginal, by gene gun, dermal patch or in eye drop or mouthwash form.

[0020] The invention further provides a method for preventing cancer, an autoimmune disorder, airway inflammation, inflammatory disorders, infectious disease, skin disorders, allergy, asthma or a disease caused by a pathogen in a vertebrate, such method comprising administering to the vertebrate an IRO compound according to the invention in a pharmaceutically effective amount. In some preferred embodiments, the IRO compound is administered in combination with one or more vaccines, antigens, antibodies, cytotoxic agents, allergens, antibiotics, antisense oligonucleotides, TLR agonists, TLR antagonists, peptides, proteins, gene therapy vectors, DNA vaccines, adjuvants or co-stimulatory molecules. In some preferred embodiments, the route of administration is parenteral, mucosal delivery, oral, sublingual, transdermal, topical, inhalation, intranasal, aerosol, intraocular,

intratracheal, intrarectal, vaginal, by gene gun, dermal patch or in eye drop or mouthwash form.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- [0021] Figure 1 demonstrates IRO inhibition of the TLR9 agonist activity of an IMO.
- [0022] Figure 2 demonstrates the specificity of one IRO compound as an antagonist of TLR9 vs TLR3.
- [0023] Figure 3 demonstrates dose-dependent inhibition by an IRO.
- [0024] Figures 4A – 4D demonstrate that pre-administration and simultaneous administration of IRO can inhibit an agonist of TLR9.
- [0025] Figures 5A and 5B demonstrate that two CpG oligonucleotides linked at their 5' ends show TLR-inhibitory properties.
- [0026] Figure 6 demonstrates that an IRO inhibited TLR9 agonist activity in human cell cultures.
- [0027] Figure 7 demonstrates an IRO effect on OVA induced Th2 and Th1 immune responses.
- [0028] Figure 8 demonstrates that an IRO reversed Th2 inhibitory properties and inhibited Th1 immune responses induced by an IMO.
- [0029] Figure 9 demonstrates antibody responses to an IMO and an IRO.
- [0030] Figure 10 depicts the administration protocol that was used to identify and characterize IRO activity in vivo.
- [0031] Figure 11 demonstrates early inhibitory activity of selected IROs on TLR2, TLR3, TLR4, TLR5, TLR7, TLR8, and TLR9 in vivo.
- [0032] Figure 12 demonstrates early inhibitory activity of selected IROs on TLR2, TLR3, TLR4, TLR5, TLR7, TLR8, and TLR9 in vivo.
- [0033] Figure 13 demonstrates early inhibitory activity of selected IROs on TLR2, TLR3, TLR4, TLR5, TLR7, TLR8, and TLR9 in vivo.
- [0034] Figure 14 demonstrates long-term antagonist activity of selected IROs on TLR2, TLR3, TLR4, TLR5, TLR7, TLR8, and TLR9 in vivo.
- [0035] Figure 15 demonstrates long-term antagonist activity of selected IROs on TLR2, TLR3, TLR4, TLR5, TLR7, TLR8, and TLR9 in vivo.
- [0036] Figure 16 demonstrates long-term antagonist activity of selected IROs on TLR2, TLR3, TLR4, TLR5, TLR7, TLR8, and TLR9 in vivo.
- [0037] Figure 17 demonstrates that an IRO inhibits proliferation of wild type (BALB/c) and lupus prone (MRL-lpr) mice B lymphocyte proliferation in vitro.

[0038] Figures 18A through 18C demonstrate that an IRO inhibited IL-6 and IL-12 production by wild type (BALB/c) and lupus prone (MRL-lpr) mice B lymphocytes and lupus prone (NZBW) mice spleen cells in vitro.

[0039] Figures 19A through 19E demonstrate that MRL-lpr mice injected with an IRO reduced levels of anti-DNA IgG1 and IgG2a antibodies in serum and protein in urine.

[0040] Figure 20 demonstrates that an IRO inhibits serum anti-DNA IgG2a in NZBW mice.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

[0041] The present invention relates to the therapeutic use of novel oligonucleotides as immune modulatory agents for immunotherapy applications. Specifically, the invention provides Immune Regulatory Oligonucleotide (IRO) compounds as antagonists of toll-like receptors (TLRs) to inhibit and/or suppress a TLR-mediated immune response. These IROs have unique sequences that inhibit or suppress TLR-mediated signaling in response to endogenous and/or exogenous TLR ligands or agonists. The references cited herein reflect the level of knowledge in the field and are hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety. Any conflicts between the teachings of the cited references and this specification shall be resolved in favor of the latter.

[0042] The invention provides methods for suppressing an immune response caused by TLRs and can be used for immunotherapy applications such as, but not limited to, treatment of cancer, autoimmune disorders, asthma, respiratory allergies, food allergies, skin allergies, systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE), arthritis, pleurisy, chronic infections, inflammatory diseases, inflammatory bowel syndrome, sepsis, and bacteria, parasitic, and viral infections in adult and pediatric human and veterinary applications. Thus, the invention further provides IRO compounds having optimal levels of immune modulatory effect for immunotherapy and methods for making and using such compounds. In addition, IRO compounds of the invention are useful in combination with, for example, DNA vaccines, antigens, antibodies, and allergens; and in combination with chemotherapeutic agents (both traditional chemotherapy and modern targeted therapies) and/or antisense oligonucleotides for prevention and treatment of diseases.

DEFINITIONS

[0043] The term "oligonucleotide" generally refers to a polynucleoside comprising a plurality of linked nucleoside units. Such oligonucleotides can be obtained from existing nucleic acid sources, including genomic or cDNA, but are preferably produced by synthetic methods. In preferred embodiments each nucleoside unit can encompass various chemical modifications and substitutions as compared to wild-type oligonucleotides, including but not limited to modified nucleoside base and/or modified sugar unit. Examples of chemical modifications are known to the person skilled in the art and are described, for example, in Uhlmann E et al. (1990)

Chem. Rev. 90:543; "Protocols for Oligonucleotides and Analogs" Synthesis and Properties & Synthesis and Analytical Techniques, S. Agrawal, Ed, Humana Press, Totowa, USA 1993; and Hunziker, J. et al. (1995) Mod. Syn. Methods 7:331-417; and Crooke, S. et al. (1996) Ann.Rev. Pharm. Tox. 36:107-129. The nucleoside residues can be coupled to each other by any of the numerous known internucleoside linkages. Such internucleoside linkages include, without limitation, phosphodiester, phosphorothioate, phosphorodithioate, alkylphosphonate, alkylphosphonothioate, phosphotriester, phosphoramidate, siloxane, carbonate, carboalkoxy, acetamidate, carbamate, morpholino, borano, thioether, bridged phosphoramidate, bridged methylene phosphonate, bridged phosphorothioate, and sulfone internucleoside linkages. The term "oligonucleotide" also encompasses polynucleosides having one or more stereospecific internucleoside linkage (e.g., (*R_P*)- or (*S_P*)-phosphorothioate, alkylphosphonate, or phosphotriester linkages). As used herein, the terms "oligonucleotide" and "dinucleotide" are expressly intended to include polynucleosides and dinucleosides having any such internucleoside linkage, whether or not the linkage comprises a phosphate group. In certain preferred embodiments, these internucleoside linkages may be phosphodiester, phosphorothioate, or phosphorodithioate linkages, or combinations thereof.

[0044] The term "2'-substituted ribonucleoside" or "2'-substituted arabinoside" generally includes ribonucleosides or arabinonucleosides in which the hydroxyl group at the 2' position of the pentose moiety is substituted to produce a 2'-substituted or 2'-O-substituted ribonucleoside. In certain embodiments, such substitution is with a lower hydrocarbyl group containing 1-6 saturated or unsaturated carbon atoms, with a halogen atom, or with an aryl group having 6-10 carbon atoms, wherein such hydrocarbyl, or aryl group may be unsubstituted or may be substituted, e.g., with halo, hydroxy, trifluoromethyl, cyano, nitro, acyl, acyloxy, alkoxy, carboxyl, carboalkoxy, or amino groups. Examples of 2'-O-substituted ribonucleosides or 2'-O-substituted-arabinosides include, without limitation 2'-amino, 2'-fluoro, 2'-allyl, 2'-O-alkyl and 2'-propargyl ribonucleosides or arabinosides, 2'-O-methylribonucleosides or 2'-O-methylarabinosides and 2'-O-methoxyethoxyribonucleosides or 2'-O-methoxyethoxyarabinosides.

[0045] The term "3'", when used directionally, generally refers to a region or position in a polynucleotide or oligonucleotide 3' (downstream) from another region or position in the same polynucleotide or oligonucleotide.

[0046] The term "5'", when used directionally, generally refers to a region or position in a polynucleotide or oligonucleotide 5' (upstream) from another region or position in the same polynucleotide or oligonucleotide.

[0047] The term "about" generally means that the exact number is not critical. Thus, the number of nucleoside residues in the oligonucleotides is not critical, and oligonucleotides having one or two fewer nucleoside residues, or from one to several additional nucleoside residues are contemplated as equivalents of each of the embodiments described above.

[0048] The term "agonist" generally refers to a substance that binds to a receptor of a cell and induces a response. An agonist often mimics the action of a naturally occurring substance such as a ligand.

[0049] The term "antagonist" generally refers to a substance that attenuates the effects of an agonist.

[0050] The term "adjuvant" generally refers to a substance which, when added to an immunogenic agent such as vaccine or antigen, enhances or potentiates an immune response to the agent in the recipient host upon exposure to the mixture.

[0051] The term "airway inflammation" generally includes, without limitation, asthma.

[0052] The term "allergen" generally refers to an antigen or antigenic portion of a molecule, usually a protein, which elicits an allergic response upon exposure to a subject. Typically the subject is allergic to the allergen as indicated, for instance, by the wheal and flare test or any method known in the art. A molecule is said to be an allergen even if only a small subset of subjects exhibit an allergic immune response upon exposure to the molecule.

[0053] The term "allergy" generally refers to an inappropriate immune response characterized by inflammation and includes, without limitation, food allergies and respiratory allergies.

[0054] The term "antigen" generally refers to a substance that is recognized and selectively bound by an antibody or by a T cell antigen receptor, resulting in induction of an immune response. Antigens may include but are not limited to peptides, proteins, nucleosides, nucleotides, and combinations thereof. Antigens may be natural or synthetic and generally induce an immune response that is specific for that antigen.

[0055] The term "autoimmune disorder" generally refers to disorders in which "self" components undergo attack by the immune system.

[0056] The term "TLR-mediated disease" or TLR-mediated disorder" generally means any pathological condition for which activation of one or more TLRs is a contributing factor. Such conditions include but are not limited, cancer, an autoimmune disorder, airway inflammation, inflammatory disorders, infectious disease, skin disorders, allergy, asthma or a disease caused by a pathogen.

[0057] The term "physiologically acceptable" generally refers to a material that does not interfere with the effectiveness of an IRO compound and that is compatible with a biological system such as a cell, cell culture, tissue, or organism. Preferably, the biological system is a living organism, such as a vertebrate.

[0058] The term "carrier" generally encompasses any excipient, diluent, filler, salt, buffer, stabilizer, solubilizer, oil, lipid, lipid containing vesicle, microspheres, liposomal encapsulation, or other material well known in the art for use in pharmaceutical formulations. It will be understood that the characteristics of the carrier, excipient, or diluent will depend on the route of administration for a particular application. The preparation of pharmaceutically acceptable formulations containing these materials is described in, *e.g.*, *Remington's Pharmaceutical Sciences*, 18th Edition, ed. A. Gennaro, Mack Publishing Co., Easton, PA, 1990.

[0059] The term "co-administration" generally refers to the administration of at least two different substances sufficiently close in time to modulate an immune response. Co-administration refers to simultaneous administration, as well as temporally spaced order of up to several days apart, of at least two different substances in any order, either in a single dose or separate doses.

[0060] The term "complementary" generally means having the ability to hybridize to a nucleic acid. Such hybridization is ordinarily the result of hydrogen bonding between complementary strands, preferably to form Watson-Crick or Hoogsteen base pairs, although other modes of hydrogen bonding, as well as base stacking can also lead to hybridization.

[0061] The term an "effective amount" or a "sufficient amount" generally refers to an amount sufficient to affect a desired biological effect, such as beneficial results. Thus, an "effective amount" or "sufficient amount" will depend upon the

context in which it is being administered. In the context of administering a composition that modulates an immune response to a co-administered antigen, an effective amount of an IRO compound and antigen is an amount sufficient to achieve the desired modulation as compared to the immune response obtained when the antigen is administered alone. An effective amount may be administered in one or more administrations.

[0062] The term "in combination with" generally means in the course of treating a disease or disorder in a patient, administering an IRO compound and an agent useful for treating the disease or disorder that does not diminish the immune modulatory effect of the IRO compound. Such combination treatment may also include more than a single administration of an IRO compound and/or independently an agent. The administration of the IRO compound and/or the agent may be by the same or different routes.

[0063] The term "individual" or "subject" or "vertebrate" generally refers to a mammal, such as a human. Mammals generally include, but are not limited to, humans, non-human primates, rats, mice, cats, dogs, horses, cattle, cows, pigs, sheep, and rabbits.

[0064] The term "nucleoside" generally refers to compounds consisting of a sugar, usually ribose or deoxyribose, and a purine or pyrimidine base.

[0065] The term "nucleotide" generally refers to a nucleoside comprising a phosphate group attached to the sugar.

[0066] As used herein, the term "pyrimidine nucleoside" refers to a nucleoside wherein the base component of the nucleoside is a pyrimidine base (e.g., cytosine (C) or thymine (T) or Uracil (U)). Similarly, the term "purine nucleoside" refers to a nucleoside wherein the base component of the nucleoside is a purine base (e.g., adenine (A) or guanine (G)).

[0067] The terms "analog" or "derivative" can be used interchangeably to generally refer to any purine and/or pyrimidine nucleotide or nucleoside that has a modified base and/or sugar. A modified base is a base that is not guanine, cytosine, adenine, thymine or uracil. A modified sugar is any sugar that is not ribose or 2'-deoxyribose and can be used in the backbone for an oligonucleotide.

[0068] The term "inhibiting" or "suppressing" generally refers to a decrease in a response or qualitative difference in a response, which could otherwise arise from eliciting and/or stimulation of a response.

[0069] The term "non-nucleotide linker" generally refers to any linkage or moiety that can link or be linked to the oligonucleotides other than through a phosphorous-containing linkage. Preferably such linker is from about 2 angstroms to about 200 angstroms in length.

[0070] The term "nucleotide linkage" generally refers to a direct 3'-5' linkage that directly connects the 3' and 5' hydroxyl groups of two nucleosides through a phosphorous-containing linkage.

[0071] The terms "oligonucleotide motif" means an oligonucleotide sequence, including a dinucleotide. An "oligonucleotide motif that would be immune stimulatory, but for one or more modifications" means an oligonucleotide motif which is immune stimulatory in a parent oligonucleotide, but not in a derivative oligonucleotide, wherein the derivative oligonucleotide is based upon the parent oligonucleotide, but has one or more modifications.

[0072] The terms CpG, C*pG, C*pG* and CpG* refer to oligonucleotide motifs that are immune stimulatory and comprise cytosine or a cytosine analog and a guanine or a guanine analog.

[0073] The term "treatment" generally refers to an approach intended to obtain a beneficial or desired results, which may include alleviation of symptoms, or delaying or ameliorating a disease progression.

[0074] In a first aspect, the invention provides an immune regulatory oligonucleotide (IRO) compound. The term "IRO" refers to an immune regulatory oligonucleotide compound that is an antagonist for one or more TLR, wherein the compound comprises an oligonucleotide motif and at least one modification, wherein the oligonucleotide motif would be immune stimulatory (e.g., unmethylated CpG), but for the one or more modifications that suppress the activity of the oligonucleotide motif, provided that compound contains less than 4 consecutive guanosine nucleotides and preferably less than 3 consecutive guanosine nucleotides. Such modifications may be in the oligonucleotide 5' terminus, in a sequence flanking the oligonucleotide motif, and/or within the oligonucleotide motif. These modifications result in an IRO

compound that suppresses TLR-modulated immune stimulation. Such modifications can be to the bases, sugar residues and/or the phosphate backbone of the nucleotides/nucleosides flanking the oligonucleotide motif or within the oligonucleotide motif.

[0075] In preferred embodiments, when the modification is a 2' alkylation or alkoxylation then the modification is not 5' adjacent to the oligonucleotide motif; when the modification is a non-charged internucleoside linkage then the modification is not 5' adjacent to the oligonucleotide motif; and when the modification is a 3' alkylation or alkoxylation then the modification is not 5' or 3' adjacent to the oligonucleotide motif.

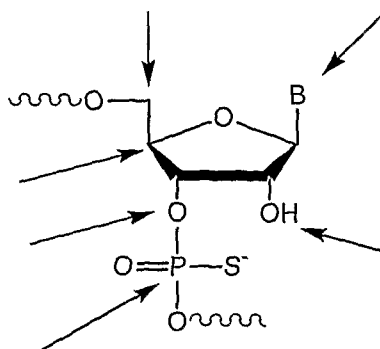
[0076] In preferred embodiments the IRO compound is not an antisense oligonucleotide.

[0077] The general structure of the IRO compounds may be represented as 5'- $N_m - N_3N_2N_1CGN^1N^2N^3 - N^m$ -3' wherein CG is an immune stimulatory motif and C is cytosine or a pyrimidine nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linker, and G is guanosine, a purine nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linker; N_1 - N_3 , at each occurrence, is independently a nucleotide, nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linker; N_m , at each occurrence, is independently a nucleotide, nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linker; provided that at least one N_1 to N_3 and/or C and/or G is a nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linker; and further provided that compound contains less than 4 consecutive guanosine nucleotides and preferably less than 3 consecutive guanosines, wherein the immune stimulatory activity of the CG is suppressed by the nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linker; and wherein m is a number from 0 to about 30.

[0078] In certain embodiments of the invention, IRO compounds may comprise at least two oligonucleotides covalently linked by a nucleotide linkage, or a non-nucleotide linker, at their 5'-, 3'- or 2'-ends or by functionalized sugar or by functionalized nucleobase via a non-nucleotide linker or a nucleotide linkage. Such IRO compounds may be linear or branched. As a non-limiting example, the linker may be attached to the 3'-hydroxyl. In such embodiments, the linker comprises a functional group, which is attached to the 3'-hydroxyl by means of a phosphate-based linkage like, for example, phosphodiester, phosphorothioate, phosphorodithioate,

methylphosphonate, or by non-phosphate-based linkages. Possible sites of conjugation for the ribonucleotide are indicated in Formula I, below, wherein B represents a heterocyclic base and wherein the arrow pointing to P indicates any attachment to phosphorous.

Formula I



[0077] . In some embodiments, the non-nucleotide linker is a small molecule, macromolecule or biomolecule, including, without limitation, polypeptides, antibodies, lipids, antigens, allergens, and oligosaccharides. In some other embodiments, the non-nucleotidic linker is a small molecule. For purposes of the invention, a small molecule is an organic moiety having a molecular weight of less than 1,000 Da. In some embodiments, the small molecule has a molecular weight of less than 750 Da.

[0078] In some embodiments, the small molecule is an aliphatic or aromatic hydrocarbon, either of which optionally can include, either in the linear chain connecting the oligoribonucleotides or appended to it, one or more functional groups including, but not limited to, hydroxy, amino, thiol, thioether, ether, amide, thioamide, ester, urea, or thiourea. The small molecule can be cyclic or acyclic. Examples of small molecule linkers include, but are not limited to, amino acids, carbohydrates, cyclodextrins, adamantane, cholesterol, haptens and antibiotics. However, for purposes of describing the non-nucleotidic linker, the term "small molecule" is not intended to include a nucleoside.

[0079] In some embodiments, the non-nucleotidic linker is an alkyl linker or amino linker. The alkyl linker may be branched or unbranched, cyclic or acyclic, substituted or unsubstituted, saturated or unsaturated, chiral, achiral or racemic mixture. The alkyl linkers can have from about 2 to about 18 carbon atoms. In some embodiments such alkyl linkers have from about 3 to about 9 carbon atoms. Some alkyl linkers include one or more functional groups including, but not limited to, hydroxy, amino, thiol, thioether, ether, amide, thioamide, ester, urea, and thioether. Such alkyl linkers can include, but are not limited to, 1,2 propanediol, 1,2,3 propanetriol, 1,3 propanediol, triethylene glycol hexaethylene glycol, polyethylene glycol linkers (e.g. $[-O-CH_2-CH_2-]_n$ ($n=1-9$)), methyl linkers, ethyl linkers, propyl

linkers, butyl linkers, or hexyl linkers. In some embodiments, such alkyl linkers may include peptides or amino acids.

[0080] In some embodiments, the non-nucleotide linker may include, but are not limited to, those listed in Table 2.

Table 2: Representative Non-Nucleotidic Linkers

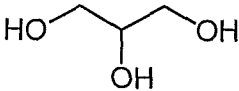
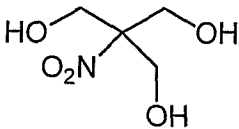
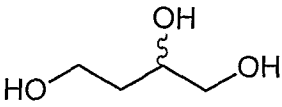
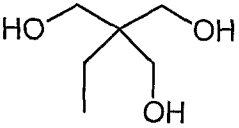
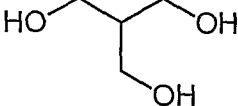
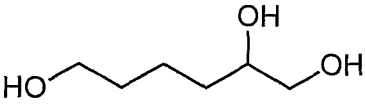
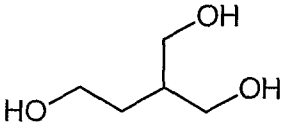
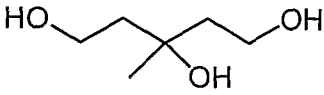
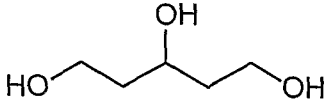
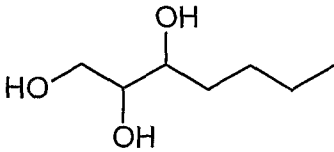
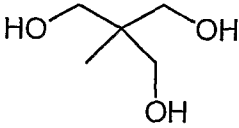
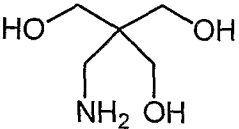
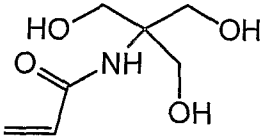
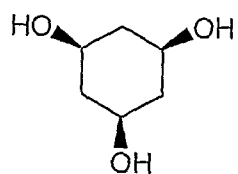
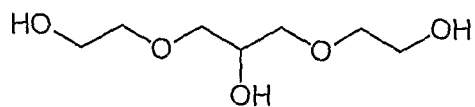
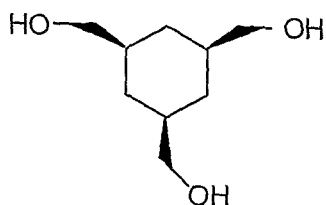
 <p>Glycerol (1,2,3-Propanetriol)</p>	 <p>1,1,1-Tris(hydroxymethyl)nitromethane</p>
 <p>1,2,4-Butanetriol</p>	 <p>1,1,1-Tris(hydroxymethyl)propane</p>
 <p>2-(hydroxymethyl)-1,3-propanediol</p>	 <p>1,2,6-Hexanetriol</p>
 <p>2-(hydroxymethyl)1,4-butanediol</p>	 <p>3-Methyl-1,3,5-pentanetriol</p>
 <p>1,3,5-Pentanetriol</p>	 <p>1,2,3-Heptanetriol</p>
 <p>1,1,1-Tris(hydroxymethyl)ethane</p>	 <p>2-Amino-2-(hydroxymethyl)-1,3-propanediol</p>
	 <p>N-[Tris(hydroxymethyl)methyl]acrylamide</p>

Table 2: Continued

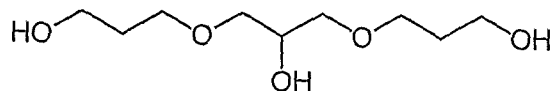
cis-1,3,5-Cyclohexanetriol



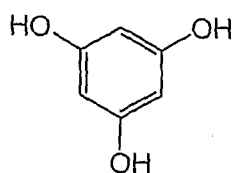
1,3-Di(hydroxyethoxy)-2-hydroxyl-propane



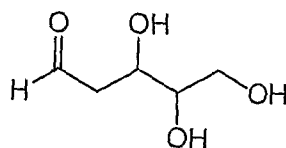
cis-1,3,5-Tri(hydroxymethyl)cyclohexane



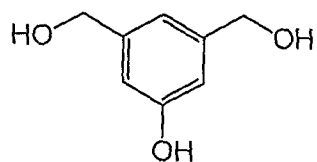
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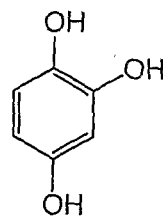
1,3,5-Trihydroxyl-benzene



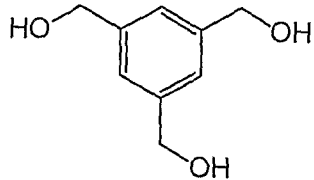
2-Deoxy-D-ribose



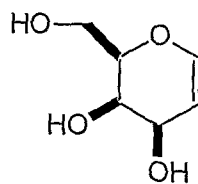
3,5-Di(hydroxymethyl)phenol



1,2,4-Trihydroxyl-benzene

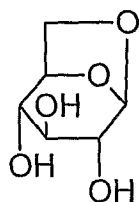
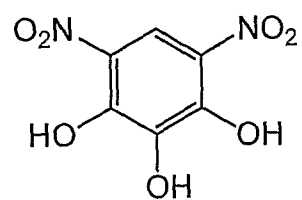


1,3,5-Tri(hydroxymethyl)benzene

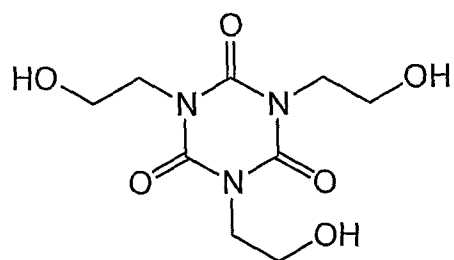


D-Galactool

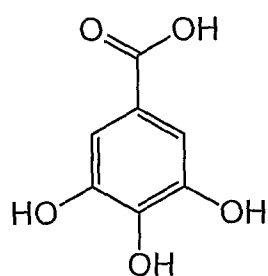
Table 2: Continued

1,6-anhydro- β -D-Glucose

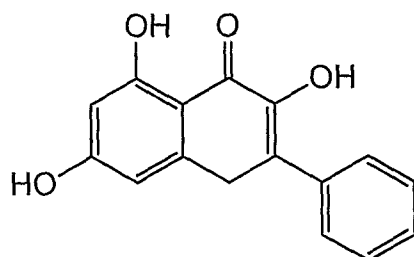
4,6-Nitropyrogallol



1,3,5-Tris(2-hydroxyethyl)-Cyanuric acid

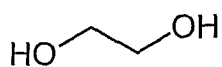


Gallic acid

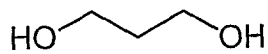


3,5,7-Trihydroxyflavone

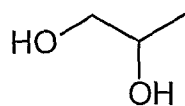
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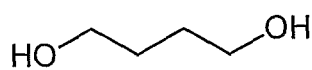
Ethylene glycol



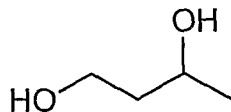
1,3-Propanediol



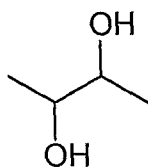
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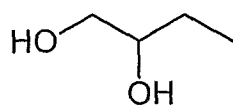
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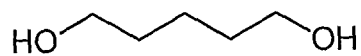
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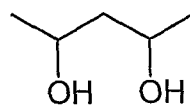
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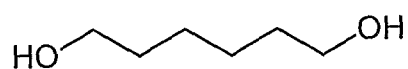
1,4-Butanediol



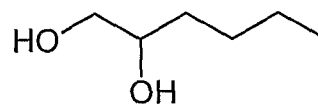
1,5-Pentanediol



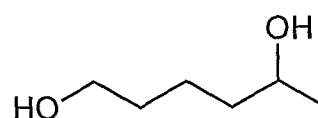
2,4-Pentanediol



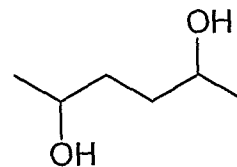
1,6-Hexanediol



1,2-Hexanediol

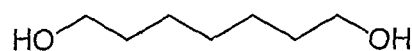


1,5-Hexanediol

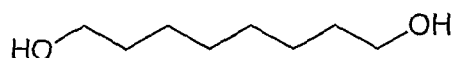


2,5-Hexanediol

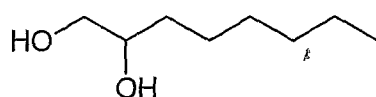
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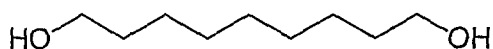
1,7-Heptanediol



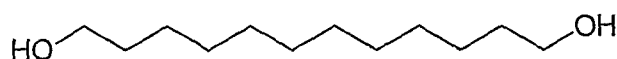
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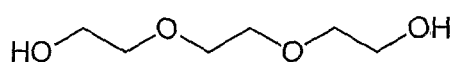
1,2-Octanediol



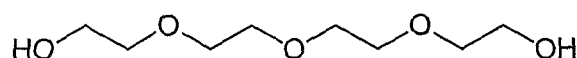
1,9-Nonanediol



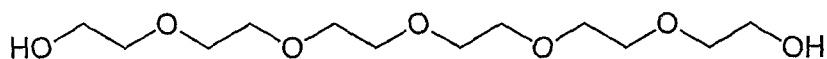
1,12-Dodecanediol



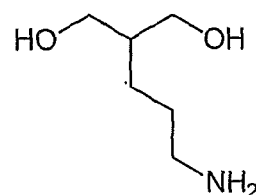
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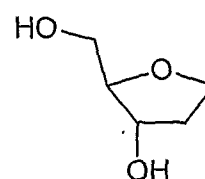
Tetraethylene glycol



Hexaethylene glycol



2-(1-Aminopropyl)-1,3-propanediol



1,2-Dideoxyribose

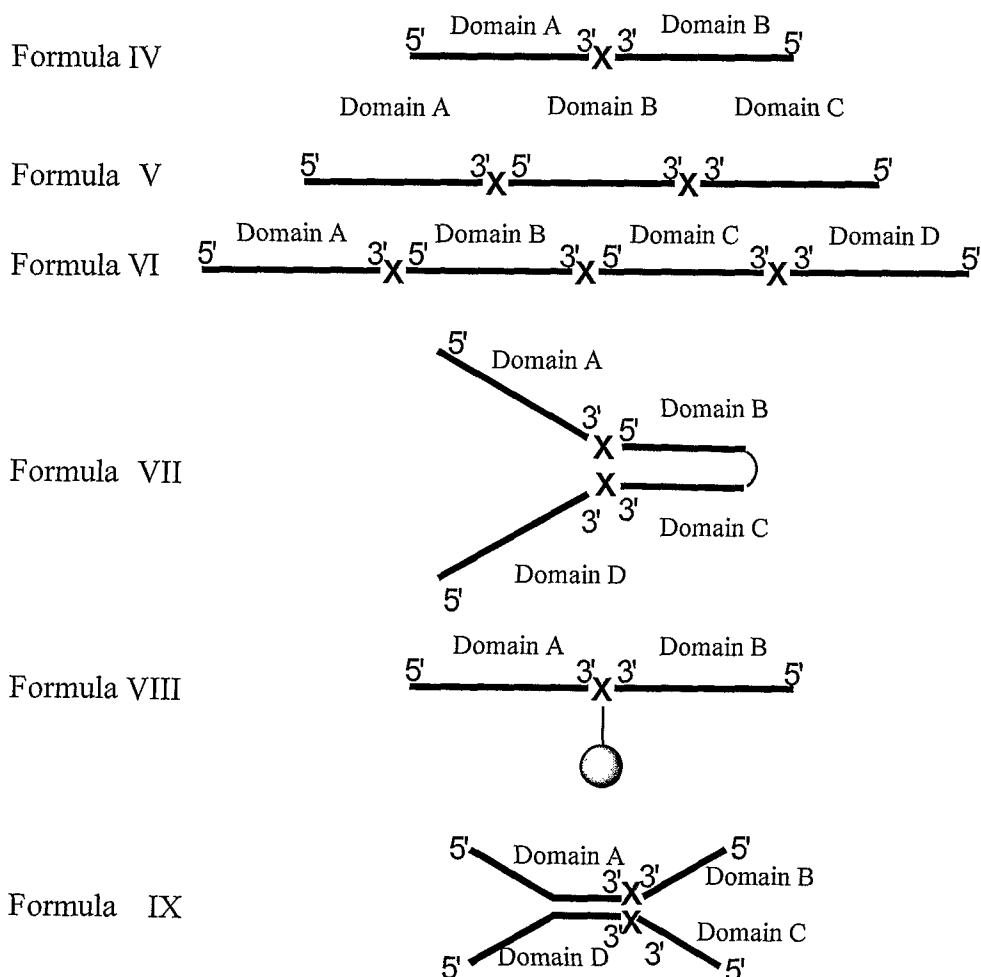
[0081] In some embodiments, the small molecule linker is glycerol or a glycerol homolog of the formula $\text{HO}-(\text{CH}_2)_o-\text{CH}(\text{OH})-(\text{CH}_2)_p-\text{OH}$, wherein o and p independently are integers from 1 to about 6, from 1 to about 4, or from 1 to about 3. In some other embodiments, the small molecule linker is a derivative of 1,3-diamino-2-hydroxypropane. Some such derivatives have the formula $\text{HO}-(\text{CH}_2)_m-\text{C}(\text{O})\text{NH}-\text{CH}_2-\text{CH}(\text{OH})-\text{CH}_2-\text{NHC}(\text{O})-(\text{CH}_2)_m-\text{OH}$, wherein m is an integer from 0 to about 10, from 0 to about 6, from 2 to about 6, or from 2 to about 4

[0082] Some non-nucleotide linkers according to the invention permit attachment of more than two oligonucleotides. For example, the small molecule linker glycerol has three hydroxyl groups to which oligonucleotides may be covalently attached. Some IROs according to the invention, therefore, comprise two or more oligonucleotides linked to a nucleotide or a non-nucleotide linker. Such IROs are referred to as being “branched.”

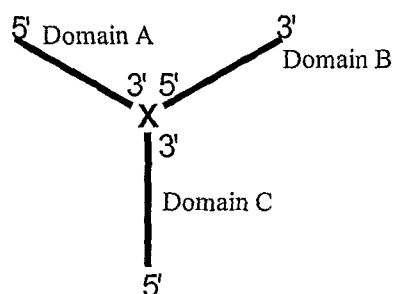
[0083] IRO compounds may comprise at least two oligonucleotides non-covalently linked, such as by electrostatic interactions, hydrophobic interactions, π -stacking interactions, hydrogen bonding and combinations thereof. Non-limiting examples of such non-covalent linkage includes Watson-Crick base pairing, Hoogsteen base pairing and base stacking.

[0084] Some of the ways in which two or more oligonucleotides can be linked are shown in Table 3.

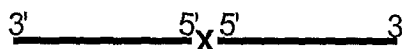
Table 3: Oligoribonucleotide Formulas IV – XI



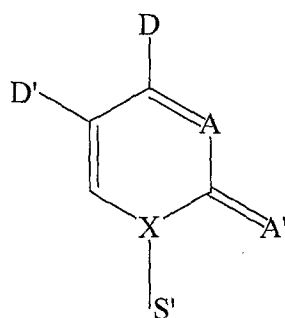
Formula X



Formula XI



[0085] In certain embodiments, pyrimidine nucleosides in the immune regulatory oligonucleotides used in the compositions and methods according to the invention have the structure (II):



(II)

wherein:

D is a hydrogen bond donor;

D' is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, hydrogen bond donor, hydrogen bond acceptor, hydrophilic group, hydrophobic group, electron withdrawing group and electron donating group;

A is a hydrogen bond acceptor or a hydrophilic group;

A' is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen bond acceptor, hydrophilic group, hydrophobic group, electron withdrawing group and electron donating group;

X is carbon or nitrogen; and

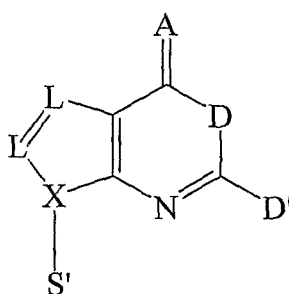
S' is a pentose or hexose sugar ring, or a sugar analog.

[0086] In certain embodiments, the sugar ring is derivatized with a phosphate moiety, modified phosphate moiety, or other linker moiety suitable for linking the pyrimidine nucleoside to another nucleoside or nucleoside analog.

[0087] In some embodiments hydrogen bond donors include, without limitation, -NH-, -NH₂, -SH and -OH. Preferred hydrogen bond acceptors include, without limitation, C=O, C=S, and the ring nitrogen atoms of an aromatic heterocycle, e.g., N3 of cytosine.

[0088] In some embodiments, (II) is a pyrimidine nucleoside derivative. Examples of pyrimidine nucleoside derivatives include, without limitation, 5-hydroxycytosine, 5-hydroxymethylcytosine, N4-alkylcytosine, or N4-ethylcytosine, araC, 5-OH-dC, N3-Me-dC, and 4-thiouracil. Chemical modified derivatives also include, but are not limited to, thymine or uracil analogues. In some embodiments, the sugar moiety S' in (II) is a sugar derivative. Suitable sugar derivatives include, but are not limited to, trehalose or trehalose derivatives, hexose or hexose derivatives, arabinose or arabinose derivatives.

[0089] In some embodiments, the purine nucleosides in immune regulatory oligonucleotides used in the compositions and methods according to the invention have the structure (III):



(III)

wherein:

D is a hydrogen bond donor;

D' is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, hydrogen bond donor, and hydrophilic group;

A is a hydrogen bond acceptor or a hydrophilic group;

X is carbon or nitrogen;
 each L is independently selected from the group consisting of C, O, N and S;
 and

S' is a pentose or hexose sugar ring, or a sugar analog.

[0090] In certain embodiments, the sugar ring is derivatized with a phosphate moiety, modified phosphate moiety, or other linker moiety suitable for linking the pyrimidine nucleoside to another nucleoside or nucleoside analog.

[0091] In certain embodiments hydrogen bond donors include, without limitation, -NH-, -NH₂, -SH and -OH. In certain embodiments hydrogen bond acceptors include, without limitation, C=O, C=S, -NO₂ and the ring nitrogen atoms of an aromatic heterocycle, e.g., N1 of guanine.

[0092] In some embodiments, (III) is a purine nucleoside derivative. Examples of purine nucleoside derivatives include, without limitation, guanine analogues such as 7-deaza-G, 7-deaza-dG, ara-G, 6-thio-G, Inosine, Iso-G, loxoribine, TOG(7-thio-8-oxo)-G, 8-bromo-G, 8-hydroxy-G, 5-aminoformycin B, Oxoformycin, 7-methyl-G, 9-p-chlorophenyl-8-aza-G, 9-phenyl-G, 9-hexyl-guanine, 7-deaza-9-benzyl-G, 6-Chloro-7-deazaguanine, 6-methoxy-7-deazaguanine, 8-Aza-7-deaza-G(PPG), 2-(Dimethylamino)guanosine, 7-Methyl-6-thioguanosine, 8-Benzyloxyguanosine, 9-Deazaguanosine, 1-(B-D-ribofuranosyl)-2-oxo-7-deaza-8-methyl-purine, 1-(2'-deoxy-β-D-ribofuranosyl)-2-oxo-7-deaza-8-methyl-purine. Chemically modified derivatives also include, but are not limited to, adenine analogues such as 9-benzyl-8-hydroxy-2-(2-methoxyethoxy)adenine, 2-Amino-N2-O-, methyladenosine, 8-Aza-7-deaza-A, 7-deaza-A, Vidarabine, 2-Aminoadenosine, N1-Methyladenosine, 8-Azaadenosine, 5-Iodotubercidin, and N1-Me-dG. In some embodiments, the sugar moiety S' in (III) is a sugar derivative as defined for Formula II.

[0093] In certain embodiments of the invention, the immune regulatory nucleic acid comprises a nucleic acid sequence containing at least one B-L-deoxy nucleoside or 3'-deoxy nucleoside.

[0094] In certain embodiments of the invention, the immune regulatory oligonucleotide comprises a nucleic acid sequence containing at least one dinucleotide

selected from CpG, C*pG, C*pG* and CpG*, wherein C is cytosine or 2'-deoxycytidine, G is guanosine or 2'-deoxyguanosine, C* is 2'-deoxythymidine, 1-(2'-deoxy- β -D-ribofuranosyl)-2-oxo-7-deaza-8-methyl-purine, 2'-dideoxy-5-halocytosine, 2'-dideoxy-5-nitrocytosine, arabinocytidine, 2'-deoxy-2'-substituted arabinocytidine, 2'-O-substituted arabinocytidine, 2'-deoxy-5-hydroxycytidine, 2'-deoxy-N4-alkyl-cytidine, 2'-deoxy-4-thiouridine, or other pyrimidine nucleoside analogs, G* is 2'-deoxy-7-deazaguanosine, 2'-deoxy-6-thioguanosine, arabinoguanosine, 2'-deoxy-2'-substituted-arabinoguanosine, 2'-O-substituted-arabinoguanosine, 2'-deoxyinosine, or other purine nucleoside analogs, and p is an internucleoside linkage selected from the group consisting of phosphodiester, phosphorothioate, and phosphorodithioate, and wherein the activity of the at least one dinucleotide is regulated by the flanking sequence.

[0095] The sequences of specific IRO within these general structures used in the present study include, but are not limited to, those shown in Table 4.

Table 4

IRO/SEQ ID NO:	Sequence
5	5'-CTATCTGACGTTCTCTGT-3'
7	5'-CTATCTGACGTTCTCTGT-3'
17	5'-CTATCTGACG ₁ TTCTCTGT-3'
37	5'-CTATCTGACG ₄ TTCTCTGT-3'
39	5'-CTATCTGAC ₄ GTTCTCTGT-3'
41	5'-CTATCTGAC ₅ GTTCTCTGT-3'
43	5'-CTATCTGAC ₆ GTTCTCTGT-3'
45	5'-CTATCTGACG ₅ TTCTCTGT-3'
47	5'-CTATCTGAC ₇ GTTCTCTGT-3'
64	5'-CTATCTAACGTTCTCTGT-3'
67	5'-CTATCTAACG ₁ TTCTCTGT-3'
22	5'-CTATCTGAmCGTTCTCTGT-3'
9	5'-CTATCTGUCGTTCTCTGT-3'
10	5'-CTATCTGUCGTTCTCTGT-3'
19	5'-CTATCTGUCG ₁ TTCTCTGT-3'

38	5'-CTATCTGUCG ₄ TTCTCTGT-3'
40	5'-CTATCTGUC ₄ GTTCTCTGT-3'
42	5'-CTATCTGUC ₅ GTTCTCTGT-3'
44	5'-CTATCTGUC ₆ GTTCTCTGT-3'
46	5'-CTATCTGUCG ₅ TTCTCTGT-3'
48	5'-CTATCTGUC ₇ GTTCTCTGT-3'
66	5'-CTATCTAUCGTTCTCTGT-3'
69	5'-CTATCTAUCG ₁ TTCTCTGT-3'
65	5'-CTATCTAGCGTTCTCTGT-3'
68	5'-CTATCTAGCG ₁ TTCTCTGT-3'
23	5'-CTATCTGmACGTTCTCTGT-3'
24	5'-CTATCTGmAmCGTTCTCTGT-3'
25	5'-CTATCTGAC ₂ GTTCTCTGT-3'
27	5'-CTATCTGTC ₂ GTTCTCTGT-3'
33	5'-CTATCTGAC ₃ GTTCTCTGT-3'
35	5'-CTATCTGTC ₃ GTTCTCTGT-3'
26	5'-CTATCTGACG ₂ TTCTCTGT-3'
28	5'-CTATCTGTGCG ₂ TTCTCTGT-3'
34	5'-CTATCTGACG ₃ TTCTCTGT-3'
36	5'-CTATCTGTGCG ₃ TTCTCTGT-3'
49	5'-CTATCTAGCGTTCTCTGT-3'
50	5'-CTATCTAGCGTTCTCTGT-3'
6	5'-CTATCTGACGUUCTCTGT-3'
51	5'-CTATCTAGCGTTCTCTGT-3'
21	3'-TCTTGCAGTCT-X ₂ -TCTGACGTTCT-3'
52	5'-CCTACTAGCGTX ₁ CTCATC-3'
53	5'-CCTACTAGCGX ₁ TCTCATC-3'
54	5'-CCTACTAG ₃ CGTTCTCATC-3'
55	5'-TCCATGA ₁ CGTTCCTGATGC-3'
56	5'-CTATCTGAC ₂ G ₂ TTCTCTGT-3'
57	5'-C ₂ T ₂ A ₂ T ₂ C ₂ T ₂ G ₂ A ₂ C ₂ G ₂ T ₂ T ₂ C ₂ T ₂ C ₂ T ₂ G ₂ T ₂ -3'
29	5'-CTATCTGAX ₁ GTTCTCTGT-3'

30	5'-CTATCTGACX ₁ TTCTCTGT-3'
31	5'-CTATCTGTX ₁ GTTCTCTGT-3'
32	5'-CTATCTGTCX ₁ TTCTCTGT-3'
61	5'-CTATCTAGCGTX ₁ CTCTGT-3'
62	5'-CTATCTAGCGX ₁ TCTCTGT-3'
63	5'-CTATCTAGCGX ₁ X ₁ CTCTGT-3'
58	5'-CTATCTGACGTX ₃ CTCTGT-3'
59	5'-CTATCTGACGX ₃ TCTCTGT-3'
60	5'-CTATCTGACGX ₃ X ₃ CTCTGT-3'
70	5'-CTATCTAGCGTX ₃ CTCTGT-3'
71	5'-CTATCTAGCGX ₃ TCTCTGT-3'
72	5'-CTATCTAGCGX ₃ X ₃ CTCTGT-3'
74	5'-CTATCTGACGTTCTCTGT-3'
75	5'-CTATCTGACG ₁ UUCTCTGT-3'
76	5'-CCTACTAG ₆ CGTTCTCATC-3'
77	5'-TCCATGACGU ₁ TCCTGATGC-3'
78	5'-CTATCTGX ₂ CGTTCTCTGT-3'
79	5'-CTATCTX ₂ ACGTTCTCTGT-3'
80	5'-CTATCTU ₂ ACGTTCTCTGT-3'
81	5'-CTATCTGU ₂ CGTTCTCTGT-3'
82	5'-CTATCTGACGX ₂ TCTCTGT-3'
83	5'-CTATCTGACGTX ₂ CTCTGT-3'
84	5'-CTATCTGX ₃ CGTTCTCTGT-3'
85	5'-CTATCTX ₃ ACGTTCTCTGT-3'
86	(5'-TCTGACGTTCT) ₂ X ₂
87	(5'-TCTGACG ₁ TTCT) ₂ X ₂
88	(5'-TCTGACG ₄ TTCT) ₂ X ₂
89	(5'-TCTCTGACGTT) ₂ X ₂
90	5'-TCTGACG ₁ TTCT-X ₃ -TGACCGGTCA-3'
91	5'-CTATCTGTCGUUCTCTGT-3'
92	5'-CTATCTGTCG ₁ UUCTCTGT-3'
93	(5'-TCTGUCGTTCT) ₂ X ₂

94	(5'-TCT G UCG ₁ TTCT) ₂ X ₂
95	(5'-TCT G ACG ₄ TTCT) ₂ X ₂
96	(5'-TCT G ACG ₁ TT) ₂ X ₂
97	5'-TCT G ACG ₁ TTCT-X ₃ -TCAACCACACA-3'
98	5'-CTATCT G ACG ₁ TTCT C UGU-3'
99	5'-CTATCT G UCG ₁ TTCT C UGU-3'
100	(5'- U GUCG ₁ TTCT) ₂ X ₂
101	(5'- U GACG ₁ TTCT) ₂ X ₂

Bold G, A or U = 2'-OMe; Bold T = 3'-OMe; A₁ = 3'-OMe; G₁=7-deaza-dG; m= P-Me; A₂, T₂, C₂, and G₂ = B-L-deoxy nucleoside; X₁ = abasic; X₂ = glycerol linker, X₃ = C3-linker; C₃ and G₃ = 3'-deoxy-nucleoside; G₄ = araG; C₄ = araC; C₅ = 5-OH-dC; C₆ = 1-(2'-deoxy-β-D-ribofuranosyl)-2-oxo-7-deaza-8-methyl-purine; G₅ = N1-Me-dG; C₇ = N3-Me-dC; U₁=3'-OMe; U₂=dU

[0096] In some embodiments, the oligonucleotides each have from about 6 to about 35 nucleoside residues, preferably from about 9 to about 30 nucleoside residues, more preferably from about 11 to about 23 nucleoside residues. In some embodiments, the oligonucleotides have from about 6 to about 18.

[0097] In a second aspect, the invention provides pharmaceutical formulations comprising an IRO compound according to the invention and a physiologically acceptable carrier.

[0098] In a third aspect, the invention provides methods for inhibiting or suppressing TLR-mediated induction of an immune response in a vertebrate, such methods comprising administering to the vertebrate a IRO compound according to the invention. In some embodiments, the vertebrate is a mammal. In preferred embodiments, IRO compound is administered to a vertebrate in need of immune suppression.

[0099] According to this aspect of the invention, an IRO compound is capable of suppressing a TLR-based immune response to a further TLR ligand or TLR agonist. As discussed further in the Examples below, the activation of a TLR-based

immune response by a TLR agonist or TLR ligand (e.g. an immune modulatory oligonucleotide) can be suppressed/inhibited by the simultaneous, pre- or post-administration of an IRO compound, and such suppression/inhibition may be maintained for an extended period of time (e.g. days) after administration. This beneficial property of the current invention has a unique advantage for the prevention and/or treatment of a disease or disorder. For example, application of certain TLR-agonists in the course of treating the disease may cause unwanted immune stimulation that an IRO compound could suppress/inhibit. Administration of the IRO simultaneously, pre and/or post administration of the TLR-agonist may allow therapeutic benefits from the TLR-agonist while suppressing/inhibiting the unwanted side effect(s). Additionally, pre-administration of an IRO could prevent an immune response (e.g., allergic reaction) to a subsequent or later challenge by a TLR-agonist.

[00100] In the methods according to this aspect of the invention, administration of IRO compound can be by any suitable route, including, without limitation, parenteral, mucosal delivery, oral, sublingual, transdermal, topical, inhalation, intranasal, aerosol, intraocular, intratracheal, intrarectal, vaginal, by gene gun, dermal patch or in eye drop or mouthwash form. Administration of the therapeutic compositions of IRO compound can be carried out using known procedures at dosages and for periods of time effective to reduce symptoms or surrogate markers of the disease. When administered systemically, the therapeutic composition is preferably administered at a sufficient dosage to attain a blood level of IRO compound from about 0.0001 micromolar to about 10 micromolar. For localized administration, much lower concentrations than this may be effective, and much higher concentrations may be tolerated. Preferably, a total dosage of IRO compound ranges from about 0.001 mg per patient per day to about 200 mg per kg body weight per day. It may be desirable to administer simultaneously, or sequentially a therapeutically effective amount of one or more of the therapeutic compositions of the invention to an individual as a single treatment episode.

[00101] The IRO compound may optionally be linked to one or more allergens and/or antigens (self or foreign), an immunogenic protein, such as keyhole limpet hemocyanin (KLH), cholera toxin B subunit, or any other immunogenic carrier protein. IRO can also be used in combination with other compounds (e.g. adjuvants) including, without limitation, TLR agonists (e.g. TLR2 agonists and TLR9 agonists),

Freund's incomplete adjuvant, KLH, monophosphoryl lipid A (MPL), alum, and saponins, including QS-21 and imiquimod, or combinations thereof.

[00102] The methods according to this aspect of the invention are useful for model studies of the immune system. The methods are also useful for the prophylactic or therapeutic treatment of human or animal disease. For example, the methods are useful for pediatric and veterinary vaccine applications.

[00103] In a fourth aspect, the invention provides methods for therapeutically treating a patient having a disease or disorder, such methods comprising administering to the patient a IRO compound according to the invention. In various embodiments, the disease or disorder to be treated is cancer, an autoimmune disorder, infectious disease, airway inflammation, inflammatory disorders, allergy, asthma, or a disease caused by a pathogen. Pathogens include bacteria, parasites, fungi, viruses, viroids, and prions. Administration is carried out as described for the third aspect of the invention.

[00104] In a fifth aspect, the invention provides methods for preventing a disease or disorder, such methods comprising administering to the patient IRO compound according to the invention. In various embodiments, the disease or disorder to be prevented is cancer, an autoimmune disorder, airway inflammation, inflammatory disorders, infectious disease, allergy, asthma, or a disease caused by a pathogen. Pathogens include bacteria, parasites, fungi, viruses, viroids, and prions. Administration is carried out as described for the third aspect of the invention.

[00105] In any of the methods according to this aspect of the invention, the IRO compound can be administered in combination with any other agent useful for treating the disease or condition that does not diminish the immune modulatory effect of the IRO compound. In any of the methods according to the invention, the agent useful for treating the disease or condition includes, but is not limited to, one or more vaccines, antigens, antibodies, cytotoxic agents, allergens, antibiotics, antisense oligonucleotides, TLR agonist, TLR antagonist, peptides, proteins, gene therapy vectors, DNA vaccines and/or adjuvants to enhance the specificity or magnitude of the immune response, or co-stimulatory molecules such as cytokines, chemokines, protein ligands, trans-activating factors, peptides and peptides comprising modified amino acids. For example, in the treatment of cancer, it is contemplated that the IRO compound may be administered in combination with one or more chemotherapeutic compound, targeted therapeutic agent and/or monoclonal antibody. Alternatively, the

agent can include DNA vectors encoding for antigen or allergen. In these embodiments, the IRO compounds of the invention can variously act as adjuvants and/or produce direct immune modulatory effects.

[00106] The following examples are intended to further illustrate certain exemplary embodiments of the invention and are not intended to limit the scope of the invention. For example, representative TLR-ligands are shown in the following examples, but do not limit the scope of ligands to which the IROs of the invention act as antagonists.

Example 1

Synthesis of Oligonucleotides Containing Immune regulatory Moieties.

[00107] All IRO were synthesized according to standard procedures (see e.g. U.S. Patent Publication No. 20040097719).

[00108] Oligonucleotides were synthesized on a 1 μ M scale using an automated DNA synthesizer (Expedite 8909; PerSeptive Biosystems, Framingham, Mass.), following standard linear synthesis or parallel synthesis procedures (see e.g. FIGS. 5 and 6 of U.S. Patent Publication No. 20040097719).

[00109] Deoxyribonucleoside phosphoramidites were obtained from (Aldrich-Sigma, St Louis, Mo). 1',2'-dideoxyribose phosphoramidite, propyl-1-phosphoramidite, 2-deoxyuridine phosphoramidite, 1,3-bis-[5-(4,4'-dimethoxytrityl)pentylamidyl]-2-propanol phosphoramidite and methyl phosphonamidite were obtained from Glen Research (Sterling, Va.). .beta.-L-2'-deoxyribonucleoside phosphoramidite, .alpha.-2'-deoxyribonucleoside phosphoramidite, mono-DMT-glycerol phosphoramidite and di-DMT-glycerol phosphoramidite were obtained from ChemGenes (Willmington, Mass.). (4-Aminobutyl)-1,3-propanediol phosphoramidite was obtained from Clontech (Palo Alto, Calif.). Arabinocytidine phosphoramidite, arabinoguanosine, arabinothymidine and arabinouridine were obtained from Reliable Pharmaceutical (St. Louis, Mo.). Arabinoguanosine phosphoramidite, arabinothymidine phosphoramidite and arabinouridine phosphoramidite were synthesized at Idera Pharmaceuticals, Inc. (Cambridge, Mass.) (Noronha et al. (2000) Biochem., 39:7050-7062).

[00110] All nucleoside phosphoramidites were characterized by ^{31}P and ^1H NMR spectra. Modified nucleosides were incorporated at specific sites using normal coupling cycles. After synthesis, oligonucleotides were deprotected using concentrated ammonium hydroxide and purified by reverse phase HPLC, followed by dialysis. Purified oligonucleotides as sodium salt form were lyophilized prior to use. Purity was tested by CGE and MALDI-TOF MS.

Example 2

Inhibition of TLR9 stimulation

[00111] HEK293 cells stably expressing TLR9 (Invivogen) were transiently transfected with reporter gene, Seap, (Invivogen) for 6 hr. Cells were treated with 0.5 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ 5'-CTATCTGACGTTCTCTGT-3' (mouse CpG sequence; IMO/SEQ ID NO 1; 0 dose) alone and various concentrations of IRO 5 or 6 for 18 hr. TLR9-dependent reporter gene expression was determined according to the manufacturer's protocol (Invivogen) and the results are expressed as % activity of TLR9 stimulating oligonucleotide (100%). The results are shown in Figure 1. These results demonstrate that IRO 5 inhibited TLR9 agonistic activity of IMO.

Example 3

IRO specifically inhibit TLR9 stimulation

[00112] HEK293 cells stably expressing TLR9 or TLR3 (Invivogen) were transiently transfected with reporter gene, Seap, (Invivogen) for 6 hr. Cells were treated with 0.5 mg/ml IMO1 (0.5 $\mu\text{g/ml}$), IRO 5 (2.0 $\mu\text{g/ml}$), R848 (5.0 $\mu\text{g/ml}$), or poly(I).poly(C) (0.5 $\mu\text{g/ml}$) and combinations of IMO+IRO, R848+IRO, or poly(I).poly(C)+IRO for 18 hr. TLR9- or TLR3-dependent reporter gene expression was determined according to the manufacturer's protocol (Invivogen) and the results are expressed as fold change in NF-kB activity. The results are shown in Figure 2. These results demonstrate that IRO 5 inhibits the activity of the TLR9 agonist but not agonist of TLR3, and more generally that IRO's can selectively inhibit TLR activation.

Example 4

Dose-dependent inhibition by IRO

[00113] C57BL/6 mice were injected subcutaneously (s.c.) at left underarm with 0.25 mg/kg stimulating 5'-TCTGACG₁TTCT-X-TCTTG₁CAGTCT-5' (IMO/SEQ ID NO 3; G₁=7-deazaG, X=glycerol) and different doses of IRO 5 at right under arm. Serum samples were taken at 2 hours after stimulating IMO3 injection and determined IL-12 levels by ELISA. The results are shown in Figure 3. These results demonstrate dose-dependent inhibition by IRO.

Example 5

Time-dependence inhibition by IRO

[00114] C57BL/6 mice were injected s.c. at left underarm with 0.25 mg/kg stimulating IMO 3 and 1 mg/kg IRO 5 or 5'-CTATCTCACCTTCTCTGT-5' (non-CpG non-stimulatory control; oligo/SEQ ID NO 4) at right under arm either one hour before (-1h) or at the same time as stimulating IMO (0h). Serum samples were taken at 2 hours after stimulating IMO injection and determined IL-12 levels by ELISA. The results in Figure 4A demonstrate a decrease in serum IL-12 levels after administration of IRO 5 or (oligo 4) either one hour before (-1h) or at the same time as stimulating IMO (0h).

[00115] C57BL/6 mice were injected s.c. at left underarm with 0.25 mg/kg stimulating IMO 3 and intranasal administration of 10 mg/kg IRO 102 at the same time as stimulating IMO (0h). Serum samples were taken at 2 hours after stimulating IMO injection and determined IL-12 levels by ELISA. The results in Figure 4B demonstrate a decrease in serum IL-12 levels after intranasal administration of IRO 102 at the same time as s.c. of IMO.

[00116] C57BL/6 mice were injected s.c at left underarm with 0.25 mg/kg stimulating IMO 3 and 2 mg/kg or 10 mg/kg IRO 17, 99, 102 s.c. at right under arm either one hour before (-1h), twenty-four hours before (-24) or seventy-two hours before (-72) as stimulating IMO (0h). Serum samples were taken at 2 hours after stimulating IMO injection and determined IL-12 levels by ELISA. The results are shown in Figure 4C-D. These results demonstrate pre-administration and simultaneous administration of IRO was able to inhibit agonist of TLR9, and more generally that IRO's can inhibit TLR activation.

Example 6

Inhibition of TLR9 stimulation

[00117] C57BL/6 mice were injected s.c. at left underarm with 0.25 mg/kg stimulating IMO 3 and 1 mg/kg IRO 21 or control oligo 4 at right under arm either one hour before (-1h) or at the same time as stimulating IMO (0h). Serum samples were taken at 2 hours after stimulating IMO injection and determined IL-12 levels by ELISA. The results are shown in Figure 5A and 5B. These results demonstrate that a CpG oligonucleotide linked at its 5' ends show inhibitory properties, and more generally that immune stimulatory CpG oligonucleotides linked at their 5' ends can inhibit TLR activation.

Example 7

Inhibition of TLR9 in human cell cultures

[00118] Human pDCs and PBMCs were incubated with 10 ug 5'-CTATCTGTCGTTCTCTGT-3' (human CpG sequence; IMO/SEQ ID NO 2) and 40 ug IRO10 for 24 hr. The results are shown in Figure 6. These results demonstrate that an IRO inhibited TLR9 agonist activity in human cell cultures, and more generally that IROs can inhibit TLRs in human cells.

Example 8

IRO effect on OVA induced Th2 immune response

[00119] The results are shown in Figure 7. These results demonstrate that an IRO does not have an effect on Ovalbumin ("OVA") induced Th2 immune responses, whereas IMO compounds reduce OVA induced Th2 response and cause the production of Th1 cytokines.

Example 9

IRO inhibition of IMO effects on Th1 and Th2 immune responses

[00120] The results are shown in Figure 8. These results demonstrate that an IRO can reverse Th2 inhibitory properties and can inhibit Th1 immune responses induced by IMO.

Example 10

Antibody responses to IMO and IRO

[00121] Mice were immunized with HBsAg in the presence and absence of IMO 1 and IRO 5 or 6 and combinations thereof at wk 0 and wk 2 and antibody responses were measured wk 4. The results are shown in Figure 9 and demonstrate reduction by an IRO on an IMO induced IgG2A immune response.

Example 11

Inhibition of immune stimulatory oligonucleotides

[00122] HEK293 cells stably expressing TLR9 (Invivogen) were transiently transfected with reporter gene, Seap, (Invivogen) for 6 hr. Cells were treated with 0.25 µg/ml IMO alone (IMO1; 0 dose) and various concentrations of IROs for 18 hr. TLR9-dependent reporter gene expression was determined according to the manufacturer's protocol (Invivogen) and the results are expressed as % inhibition of immune stimulating oligonucleotide activity. The results are shown in Tables 5 and 6 below. These results demonstrate that IROs inhibited activity of IMO.

Table 5. Percent inhibition of immune stimulatory oligonucleotide 1. IMO1 concentration was 0.25 µg/ml and IRO concentration was 2 µg/ml

IRO #	Sequence	% Inhibition
5	5'-CTATCTGACGTTCTCTGT-3'	52.5%
25	5'-CTATCTGAC ₂ GTTCTCTGT-3'	17.5%
26	5'-CTATCTGACG ₂ TTCTCTGT-3'	15.3%
33	5'-CTATCTGAC ₃ GTTCTCTGT-3'	38.1%
39	5'-CTATCTGAC ₄ GTTCTCTGT-3'	52.8%
41	5'-CTATCTGAC ₅ GTTCTCTGT-3'	42.6%
43	5'-CTATCTGAC ₆ GTTCTCTGT-3'	23.6%

IROs containing various modifications inhibit NF-κB activation of IMO in HEK293 cells expressing TLR9, and more generally IROs containing various modifications can inhibit NF-κB activation of IMO.

Table 6. Percent inhibition of immune stimulatory oligonucleotide 1. IMO1 concentration was 0.25 µg/ml and IRO concentration was 3 µg/ml.

IRO #	Sequence	% Inhibition
5	5'-CTATCTGACGTTCTCTGT-3'	76.5%
17	5'-CTATCTGACG ₁ TTCTCTGT-3'	76.4%
34	5'-CTATCTGACG ₃ TTCTCTGT-3'	32.2%
37.	5'-CTATCTGACG ₄ TTCTCTGT-3'	78.3%

IROs containing various modifications inhibit NF- κ B activation of IMO in HEK293 cells expressing TLR9, and more generally IROs containing various modifications can inhibit NF- κ B activation of IMO.

Example 12

Time-dependence inhibition by IRO

[00123] C57BL/6 mice were injected subcutaneously (s.c.) at left underarm with 0.25 mg/kg to 10 mg/kg TLR agonist and 1 mg/kg to 20 mg/kg IRO 5, 17 or 37 or 5'-TCCTGGCGGGGAAGT-3' (poly dG control; oligo/SEQ ID NO 49) at right under arm at one hour (-1h) or up to forty-eight hours (-48) before or at the same time as TLR agonist (0h). Serum samples were taken at 2 hours after stimulating IMO injection and determined IL-12 levels by ELISA. The results are shown in Tables 7-22 below. These results demonstrate that both pre-administration and simultaneous administration of an IRO inhibits agonists of TLR9, and that the inhibitory activities of an IRO were effective even when administered 48 hours prior to the administration of the IMO. More generally, these results demonstrate that pre-administration and simultaneous administration of an IRO can both inhibit TLR agonists and that the inhibitory activities of an IRO can be seen even when administered many hours prior to the administration of the TLR agonist.

Table 7. Inhibition of IMO 3 induced IL-12 (ng/ml \pm SD) by IRO 5 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

IMO alone (0.25mg/kg)	IRO alone (2 mg/kg)	IRO+IMO			
		<u>Time of IMO administration after IRO administration</u>			
		0 hr	1 hr	3 hr	6 hr
21.1 \pm 1.84	0.81 \pm 0	0.59 \pm 0.48	1.54 \pm 0.17	6.53 \pm 0.81	10.41 \pm 0.48

IRO 5 inhibited IMO induced IL-12 production when injected up to 6 hr after IRO administration. More generally, these results demonstrate that an IRO can inhibit TLR activation and IMO induced IL-12 production when IMO is administered or initially becomes present hours after IRO administration.

Table 8. Inhibition of IMO 3 induced IL-12 (ng/ml \pm SD) by IRO 5 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

IMO alone (0.25mg/kg)	IRO alone (20 mg/kg)	IRO+IMO			
		Time of IMO administration after IRO administration			
		0 hr	1 hr	3 hr	6 hr
33.8 \pm 3.8	0.73 \pm 0.7	0.87 \pm 1.19	1.52 \pm 2.01	2.2 \pm 2.4	1.84 \pm 3.18

IRO 5 potently inhibited IMO induced IL-12 production when injected up to 6 hr after IRO administration. More generally, these results demonstrate that an IRO can substantially inhibit TLR activation and IMO induced IL-12 production when IMO is administered or initially becomes present hours after IRO administration.

Table 9. Inhibition of IMO 3 induced IL-12 (ng/ml \pm SD) by IRO 5 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

IMO alone (0.25mg/kg)	IRO alone (20 mg/kg)	IRO+IMO			
		Time of IMO administration after IRO administration			
		6 hr	14 hr	24 hr	48 hr
25.8 \pm 2.6	0.17 \pm 0	0.04 \pm 0	1.25 \pm 0	1.8 \pm 0.29	2.9 \pm 0.1

IRO 5 potently inhibited IMO induced IL-12 production when injected up to 48 hr after IRO administration. More generally, these results demonstrate that an IRO can substantially inhibit TLR activation and IMO induced IL-12 production when IMO is administered or initially becomes present hours after IRO administration.

Table 10. Inhibition of IMO 3 induced IL-12 (ng/ml \pm SD) by IRO 17 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

IMO alone (0.25mg/kg)	IRO alone (2 mg/kg)	IRO+IMO		
		Time of IMO administration after IRO administration		
		3 hr	6 hr	24 hr
6.6 \pm 0.64	0.67 \pm 0.02	1.01 \pm 0.06	1.25 \pm 0.29	4.29 \pm 1.12

IRO 17 inhibited IMO induced IL-12 production when injected up to 6 hr or more after IRO administration. More generally, these results demonstrate that an IRO can inhibit TLR activation and IMO induced IL-12 production when IMO is administered or initially becomes present hours after IRO administration.

Table 11. Inhibition of IMO 3 induced IL-12 (ng/ml \pm SD) by IRO 37 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

IMO alone (0.25mg/kg)	IRO alone (2 mg/kg)	IRO+IMO	
		<u>Time of IMO administration after IRO administration</u>	
		3 hr	
6.6 \pm 0.64	0.67 \pm 0.02	0.91 \pm 0.03	

IRO 37 inhibited IMO induced IL-12 production when injected up to 3 hr after IRO administration. More generally, these results demonstrate that an IRO can inhibit TLR activation and IMO induced IL-12 production when IMO is administered or initially becomes present hours after IRO administration.

Table 12. Inhibition of IMO 3 induced IL-12 (ng/ml \pm SD) by control poly dG (5'-TCCTGGAGGGGAAGT-3' (SEQ ID NO 73)) in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

IMO alone (0.25mg/kg)	IRO alone (10 mg/kg)	Control+IMO		
		<u>Time of IMO administration after Control administration</u>		
		3 hr	6 hr	24 hr
18.24 \pm 0.22	1.47 \pm 0	1.38 \pm 0.18	10.03 \pm 0.37	16.97 \pm 0.52

A poly dG compound known to show TLR9 antagonist activity inhibited IMO induced IL-12 production when injected up to 6 hr after IRO administration. Compared with the data for IRO (e.g. IRO 5 in Table 7), control poly dG oligo antagonistic effects are short-term and transient.

Table 13. Inhibition of IMO 3 induced IL-12 (ng/ml \pm SD) by control poly dG (5'-TCCTGGCGGGGAAGT-3' (SEQ ID NO 49)) in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

IMO alone (0.25mg/kg)	IRO alone (10 mg/kg)	Control+IMO		
		<u>Time of IMO administration after Control administration</u>		
		3 hr	6 hr	24 hr
18.24 \pm 0.22	1.2 \pm 0	0.81 \pm 0.06	10.1 \pm 0.09	19.02 \pm 1.6

A poly dG compound known to show TLR9 antagonist activity inhibited IMO induced IL-12 production when injected up to 6 hr after IRO administration. Compared with the data for IRO (e.g. IRO 5 in Table 7), control poly dG oligo antagonistic effects are short and transient.

Table 14. Inhibition of R848, a TLR7 and TLR8 agonist, induced IL-12 (ng/ml \pm SD) by IRO 5 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

R848 alone (0.5mg/kg)	IRO alone (2 mg/kg)	IRO+R848
		<u>Time of R848 administration after IRO administration</u> 1 hr
128 \pm 2.9	1.48 \pm 0.17	56.0 \pm 3.3

IRO 5 shows a low transient inhibition of R848 induced IL-12 production when injected up to 1 hr after IRO administration. More generally, these data demonstrate that an IRO can inhibit activity of intracellular TLRs.

Table 15. Inhibition of PolyI:PolyC, a TLR3 agonist, induced IL-12 (ng/ml \pm SD) by IRO 5 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

PolyI:PolyC alone (10mg/kg)	IRO alone (2 mg/kg)	IRO+PolyI:PolyC
		<u>Time of PolyI:PolyC administration after IRO administration</u> 1 hr
8.7 \pm 0.6	1.48 \pm 0.17	2.1 \pm 0.07

IRO 5 shows a low transient inhibition of PolyI:PolyC induced IL-12 production when injected up to 1 hr after IRO administration. More generally, these data demonstrate that an IRO can inhibit TLR activation and PolyI:PolyC induced IL-12 production.

Table 16. Inhibition of IMO induced MCP-1 (ng/ml \pm SD) by IRO 5 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

IMO alone (0.25mg/kg)	IRO alone (2 mg/kg)	IRO+IMO
		<u>Time of R848 administration after IRO administration</u> 1 hr
2.2 \pm 0.25	NT	0.28 \pm 0.73

IRO 5 shows potent inhibition of IMO induced MCP-1 production when injected up to 1 hr after IRO administration. More generally, these data demonstrate that an IRO can inhibit TLR activation and IMO induced MCP-1 production.

Table 17. Inhibition of R848, a TLR7 and TLR8 agonist, induced MCP-1 (ng/ml \pm SD) by IRO 5 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

R848 alone (0.5mg/kg)	IRO alone (2 mg/kg)	IRO+R848
		<u>Time of R848 administration after IRO administration</u> 1 hr
11 \pm 1.4		7.2 \pm 1.7

IRO 5 shows a low transient inhibition of R848 induced MCP-1 production when injected up to 1 hr after IRO administration. More generally, these data demonstrate that an IRO can inhibit TLR activation and MCP-1 production through intracellular TLRs.

Table 18. Inhibition of PolyI.PolyC, a TLR3 agonist, induced MCP-1 (ng/ml±SD) by IRO 5 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

PolyI.PolyC alone (10mg/kg)	IRO alone (2 mg/kg)	IRO+PolyI.PolyC
		<u>Time of PolyI.PolyC administration after IRO administration</u>
		1 hr
4.6±0.6		1.8.0±0.57

IRO 5 shows a low transient inhibition of PolyI.PolyC induced MCP-1 production when injected up to 1 hr after IRO administration. More generally, these data demonstrate that an IRO can inhibit TLR activation and MCP-1 production of a PolyI.PolyC

Table 19. Inhibition of IMO 3 induced IL-12 (ng/ml±SD) by IRO 5 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

IMO alone (0.25mg/kg)	IRO alone (20 mg/kg)	IRO+IMO		
		<u>Time of IMO administration after IRO administration</u>		
		2 days	5 days	7 days
33.2+8.7	NT	14.5+5.17	17.19+11.2	28.0+7.75

IRO 5 shows potent inhibition of IMO induced IL-12 production when injected up to 7 days after IRO administration. More generally, these data demonstrate that an IRO can inhibit TLR activation and IMO induced IL-12 production in mammals.

Table 20. Inhibition of IMO induced IL-12 (ng/ml±SD) by IRO 5 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

IMO alone (0.25mg/kg)	IRO alone (10 mg/kg)	IRO+IMO <u>Time of IMO administration after IRO administration</u> 72 hr
53.39+2.71	2.03+2.03	28.72+0.79

IRO 5 shows potent inhibition of IMO induced IL-12 production when injected up to 72 hr after IRO administration. More generally, these data demonstrate that an IRO can inhibit TLR activation and IMO induced IL-12 production in mammals hours after the IRO is administered.

Table 21. Inhibition of R848, a TLR7 and TLR8 agonist, induced IL-12 (ng/ml \pm SD) by IRO 5 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

R848 alone (0.125mg/kg)	IRO alone (10 mg/kg)	IRO+R848
		<u>Time of R848 administration after IRO administration</u> 72 hr
96.5 \pm 3.4	2.03 \pm 2.03	13.64 \pm 0.47

IRO 5 shows inhibition of R848 induced IL-12 production when injected up to 72 hr after IRO administration. More generally, these data demonstrate that an IRO can inhibit the activity of an agonist of intracellular TLR's and TLR agonist induced IL-12 production in mammals hours after the IRO is administered.

Table 22. Inhibition of PolyI.PolyC, a TLR3 agonist, induced IL-12 (ng/ml \pm SD) by IRO 5 in vivo, C57BL/6 mice (n=3)

PolyI.PolyC alone (10 mg/kg)	IRO alone (10 mg/kg)	IRO+PolyI.PolyC
		<u>Time of PolyI.PolyC administration after IRO administration</u> 72 hr
28.42 \pm 1.2	2.03 \pm 2.03	26.61 \pm 5.97

IRO 5 shows no inhibition of PolyI.PolyC induced IL-12 production when injected 72 hr after IRO administration.

Example 13

Short-term and Long-term blocking activities of IRO against TLR agonist

[00124] To assess the short term activity and selectivity of IRO compounds, mice were subcutaneously injected with 2 mg/kg IRO in their right flank one hour (-1h) before subcutaneous administration of a TLR agonist to the left flank. Serum samples were taken at 2 hours after administration of the TLR agonist and were analyzed using multiple cytokine/chemokine detecting Luminex kits obtained from Biosource (Camarillo, CA). Manufacture recommended protocols were followed. Cytokine/chemokine values were determined from mean values falling on the standard curve determined on a Luminex 100 instrument. Luminex analysis was performed using STarStation software (Applied Cytometry Systems, Sacramento, CA). The following representative agonists were used at the indicated dose: 5'-TCTGACG₁TTCT-X-TCTTG₁CAGTCT-5' (TLR9 agonist; 0.25 mg/kg, G₁=7-deaza-dG), R848 (TLR7/8 agonist, 0.1 mg/kg), Loxoribine (TLR7 agonist, 100 mg/kg), Flagellin (TLR5 agonist, 0.25 mg/kg), LPS (TLR4 agonist, 0.25 mg/kg), PolyI.PolyC

(TLR3 agonist, 20 mg/kg), and MALP-2 (TLR2 agonist, 0.5 mg/kg). The results are shown in Figures 10-12. These data demonstrate that IROs can inhibit cytokine/chemokine production in response to TLR agonists. The effect is greater for intracellular TLRs (e.g. TLR3, TLR7, TLR8, and TLR9) as compared to extracellular TLRs (e.g. TLR2, TLR4, and TLR5).

[00125] To assess the long-term activity and selectivity of IRO compounds, mice were subcutaneously injected with 10 mg/kg IRO in their right flank seventy-two hours (-72h) before subcutaneous administration of a TLR agonist (as described above) to the left flank. Serum samples were taken at 2 hours after administration of the TLR agonist and were analyzed as described above. The results are shown in Figures 13-15. These results demonstrate pre-administration administration of an IRO was able to inhibit TLR agonist, and that the inhibitory activities of IRO were effective even when administered 72 hours prior to the administration of the agonist.

Example 14

Activities of IRO compounds in lupus mouse model

[00126] Purified mouse spleen B cells from wild-type (BALB/c) and lupus prone (MRL-lpr) mice were cultured with 1 µg/ml IRO-17 in the presence or absence of 0.3 µg/ml IMO, or 0.3 µg/ml IMO or medium alone for 72 h. The results are shown in Figure 16. These results demonstrate that administration of IRO was able to inhibit B lymphocyte proliferation.

[00127] Purified mouse spleen B cells from wild-type (BALB/c) and lupus prone (MRL-lpr) mice were cultured with 1 µg/ml IRO-17 in the presence or absence of 0.3 µg/ml IMO, or 0.3 µg/ml IMO or medium alone for 72 h. The results are shown in Figure 17A. These results demonstrate that administration of IRO was able to inhibit IL-6 production by mice B lymphocytes. Purified mouse spleen B cells from wild-type (BALB/c) and lupus prone (NZBW) mice were cultured with 0.01 to 10 µg/ml IRO-17 in the presence of 1 µg/ml IMO, or alone with 10 µg/ml IRO-17, 1 µg/ml IMO or medium for 72 h. The results are shown in Figures 17B and 17C. These results demonstrate that administration of an IRO was able to inhibit IL-6 and IL-12 production by mice spleen cells.

[00128] Lupus prone MRL-lpr mice were injected once a week s.c. with 100 µg doses of IRO-5 from wk 9 to 18, and 21 to 23 or IRO-17 starting from wk 10 to 15,

100 µg three times week in weeks 18-21 and 40 mg three times a week in weeks 22 to 24. Blood and urine were collected every week before IRO injection. Mice were sacrificed Wk 24. Serum anti-DNA IgG1 levels were determined by ELISA. The results are shown in Figures 18A through 18E. These results demonstrate that IRO 5 and IRO17 can inhibit IgG1 and IgG2A production and urine protein in Lupus prone mice.

[00129] Lupus prone NZBW mice are dosed with 300 µg IRO-5, s.c once in every two weeks starting week 6. Serum anti-DNA IgG2a levels were determined at weeks 16 and 20. The results are shown in Figure 19. These results demonstrate that administration of IRO inhibits serum anti-DNA IgG2a in NZBW mice.

What is claimed is:

1. A TLR antagonist comprising an immune regulatory oligonucleotide (IRO) compound.
2. The antagonist according to Claim 1, having one or more chemical modifications in the sequence flanking the immune stimulatory motif.
3. The antagonist according to Claim 1, having one or more chemical modifications in an oligonucleotide motif that would be immune stimulatory but for the modification.
4. The antagonist according to Claim 1, having one or more chemical modifications in an oligonucleotide motif that would be immune stimulatory but for the modification in the sequence flanking the oligonucleotide motif.
5. An IRO compound having the structure



wherein:

CG is an oligonucleotide motif and C is cytosine or a pyrimidine nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linkage, and G is guanosine a purine nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linkage;

N1-N3, at each occurrence, is independently a nucleotide, nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linkage;

Nm, at each occurrence, is independently a nucleotide, nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linkage;

provided that at least one N1 to N3 and/or C and/or G is a nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linkage;

and further provided that compound contains less than 4 consecutive guanosine nucleotides

wherein the oligonucleotide motif would be immune stimulatory but for the nucleotide derivative or non-nucleotide linkage;

and wherein m is a number from 0 to about 30.

6. A pharmaceutical composition comprising any one of the compositions of claims 1-5 and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.
7. A method for modifying a TLR-stimulating oligonucleotide comprising an immune stimulatory oligonucleotide motif comprising incorporating chemical modifications into the immune stimulatory oligonucleotide motif and/or to the sequence flanking the immune stimulatory oligonucleotide motif, wherein the immune stimulatory activity of the immune stimulatory oligonucleotide motif is suppressed by the chemical modifications.
8. A method for inhibiting a TLR-mediated immune response in a vertebrate, the method comprising administering to the vertebrate an IRO compound according to any of the claims 1-5 in a pharmaceutically effective amount.
9. The method according to claim 8, wherein the route of administration is parenteral, mucosal delivery, oral, sublingual, transdermal, topical, inhalation, intranasal, aerosol, intraocular, intratracheal, intrarectal, vaginal, by gene gun, dermal patch or in eye drop or mouthwash form.
10. A method for inhibiting TLR stimulation comprising administering an IRO compound.
11. The method of claim 18, wherein the TLR is selected from TLR2, TLR3, TLR4, TLR5, TLR7, TLR8, and TLR9.
12. A method for inhibiting the activity of a TLR agonist comprising administering an IRO compound.
13. The method according to claim 20, comprising administering the IRO at the same time as the TLR agonist.
14. The method according to claim 20, comprising administering the IRO prior to the TLR agonist.
15. The method of claim 16, wherein the TLR agonist is selected from an agonist of TLR2, TLR3, TLR4, TLR5, TLR7, TLR8, and TLR9.
16. A method for therapeutically treating a vertebrate having a disease mediated by a TLR, such method comprising administering to the vertebrate an IRO compound according to claims 1-5 in a pharmaceutically effective amount

17. The method according to claim 16 wherein the disease is cancer, an autoimmune disorder, airway inflammation, inflammatory disorders, infectious disease, skin disorders, allergy, asthma or a disease caused by a pathogen.

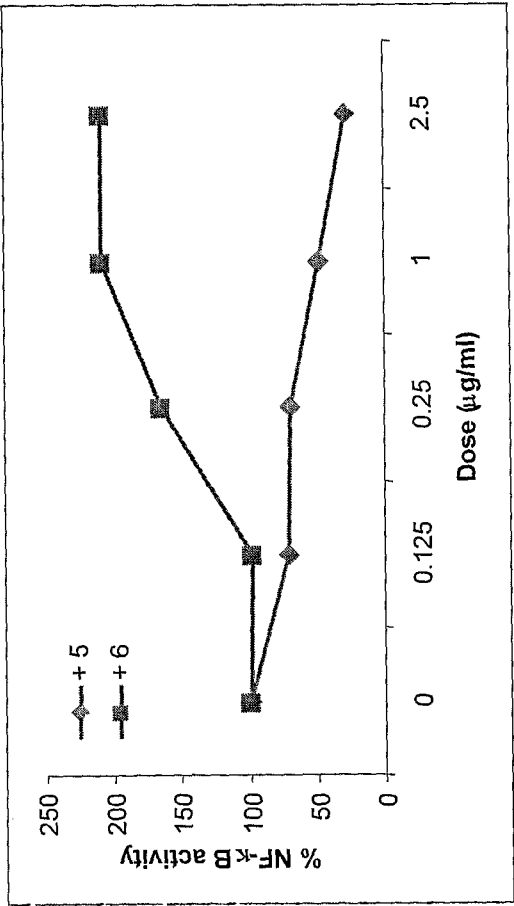
18. The method according to claim 16, wherein the IRO compound is administered in combination with one or more vaccines, antigens, antibodies, cytotoxic agents, allergens, antibiotics, antisense oligonucleotides, TLR agonists, TLR antagonists, peptides, proteins, gene therapy vectors, DNA vaccines, adjuvants or co-stimulatory molecules.

19. The method according to claim 16, wherein the route of administration is parenteral, mucosal delivery, oral, sublingual, transdermal, topical, inhalation, intranasal, aerosol, intraocular, intratracheal, intrarectal, vaginal, by gene gun, dermal patch or in eye drop or mouthwash form.

20. A method for preventing cancer, an autoimmune disorder, airway inflammation, inflammatory disorders, infectious disease, skin disorders, allergy, asthma or a disease caused by a pathogen in a vertebrate, such method comprising administering to the vertebrate an IRO compound according to any of claims 1-5 in a pharmaceutically effective amount.

21. The method according to claim 20, wherein the IRO compound is administered in combination with one or more vaccines, antigens, antibodies, cytotoxic agents, allergens, antibiotics, antisense oligonucleotides, TLR agonists, TLR antagonists, peptides, proteins, gene therapy vectors, DNA vaccines, adjuvants or co-stimulatory molecules.

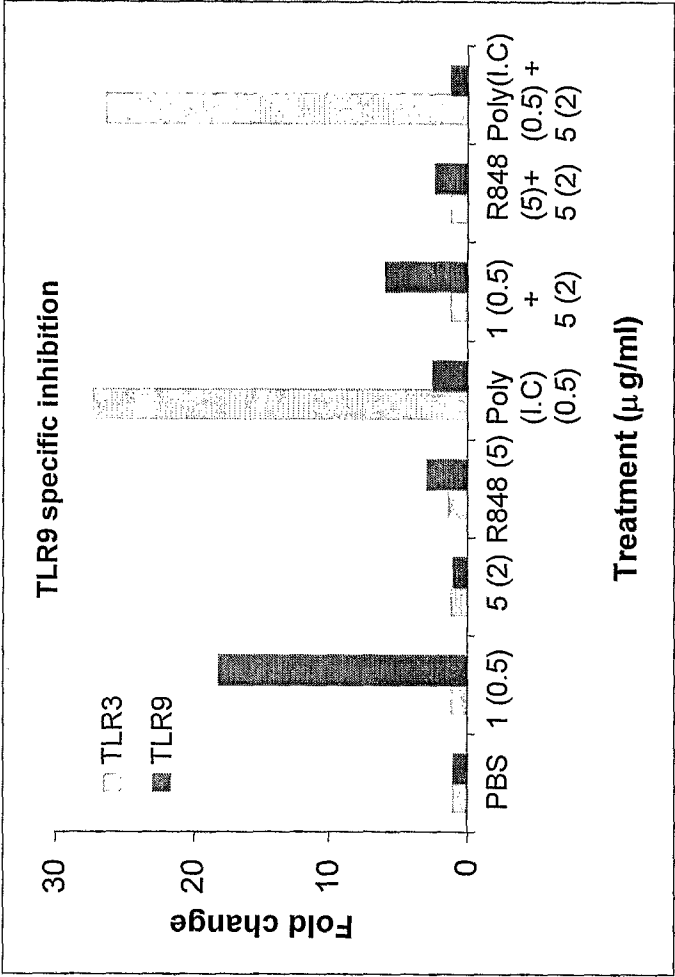
22. The method according to claim 20 wherein the route of administration is parenteral, mucosal delivery, oral, sublingual, transdermal, topical, inhalation, intranasal, aerosol, intraocular, intratracheal, intrarectal, vaginal, by gene gun, dermal patch or in eye drop or mouthwash form.



- 1 5'-CTATCTGACGTTCTCTGT-3'
- 5 5'-CTATCTCT**G**ACGTTCTCTGT-3'
- 6 5'-CTATCTGACG**U**UCTCTGT-3'

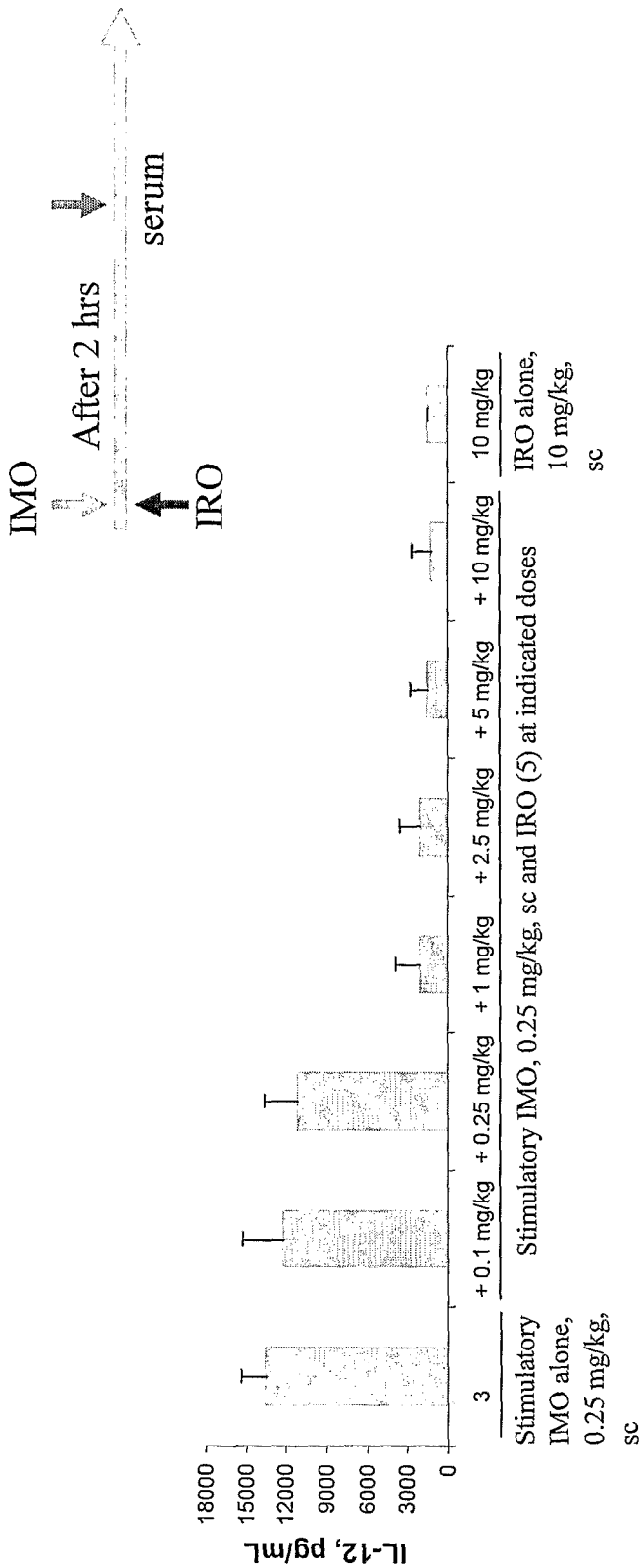
Nucleotides shown in bold are 2'-O-methylribonucleotides

Figure 1



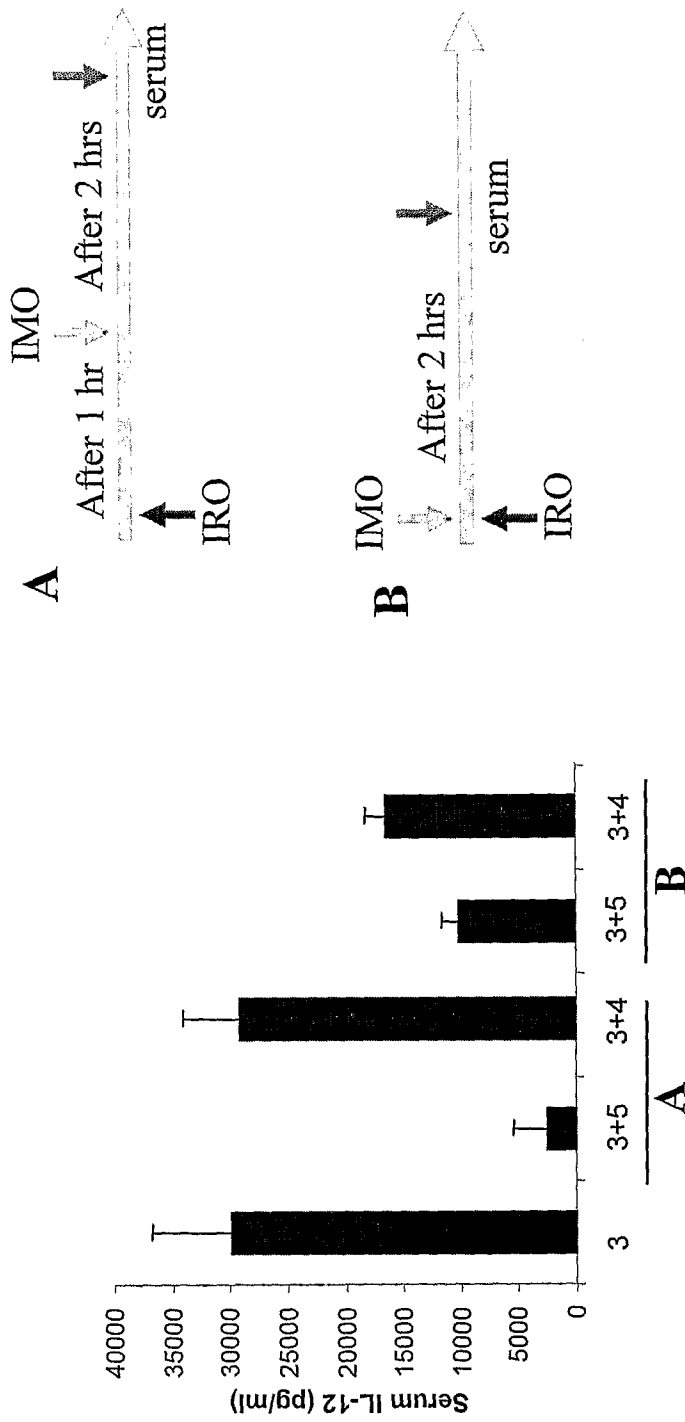
1 5'-CTATCTGACGTTCTCTGT-3'
5 5'-CTATCT**G**ACGTTCTCTGT-3'
Nucleotides shown in bold are 2'-O-methylribonucleotides

Figure 2



3 5'-TCTGACRITTCT-X-TCTTRCAGTCT-5'
5 5'-CTATCTGACGTTCTCTGT-3'
G and A are 2'-O-methylribonucleotides;
R is 2'-deoxy-7-deazaguanosine

Figure 3



3 5'-TCTGACRTTCT-X-TCTTRCAGTCT-5

4 5'-CTATCTCACCCTTCTCTGT-3'

5 5'-CTATCTCGACGTTCTCTGT-3'

G and A are 2'-O-methylribonucleotides;

R is 2'-deoxy-7-deazaguanosine

Figure 4A

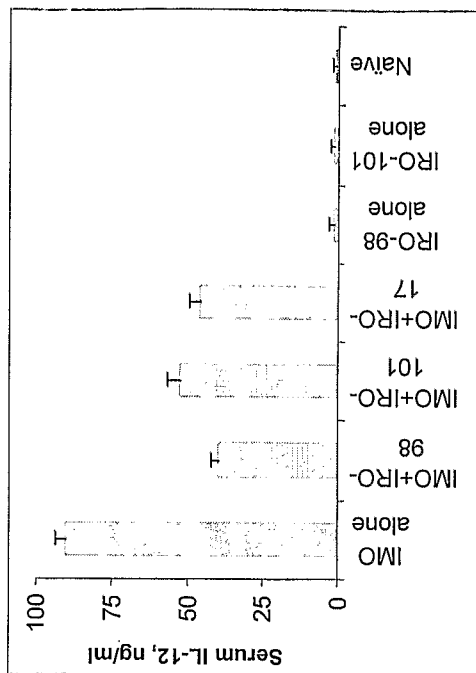


Figure 4C

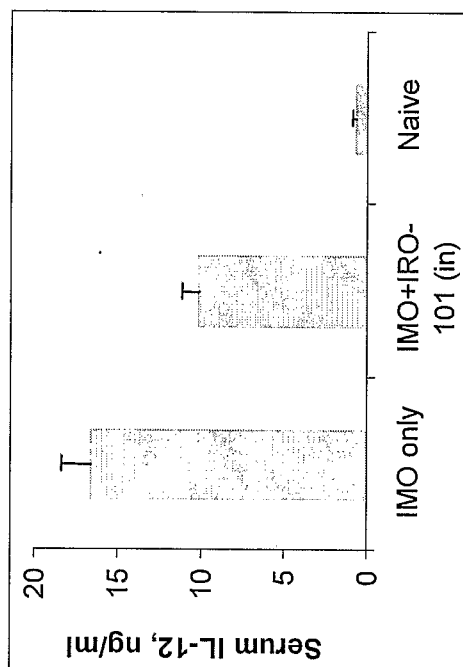


Figure 4B

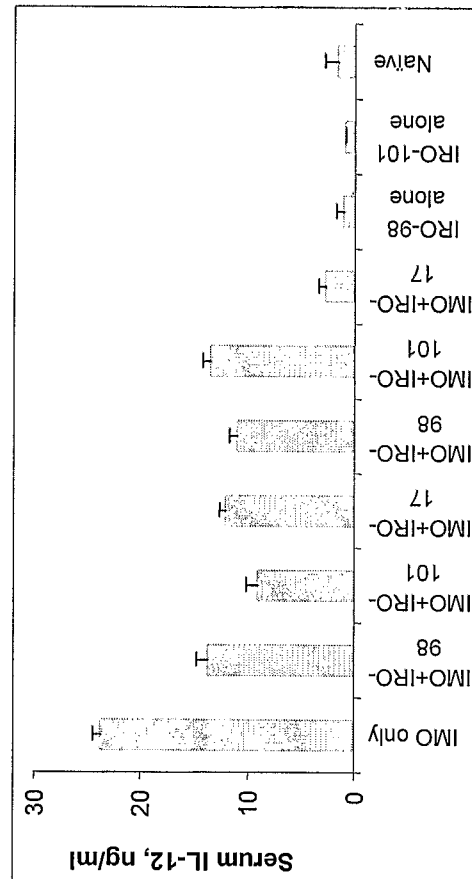


Figure 4D

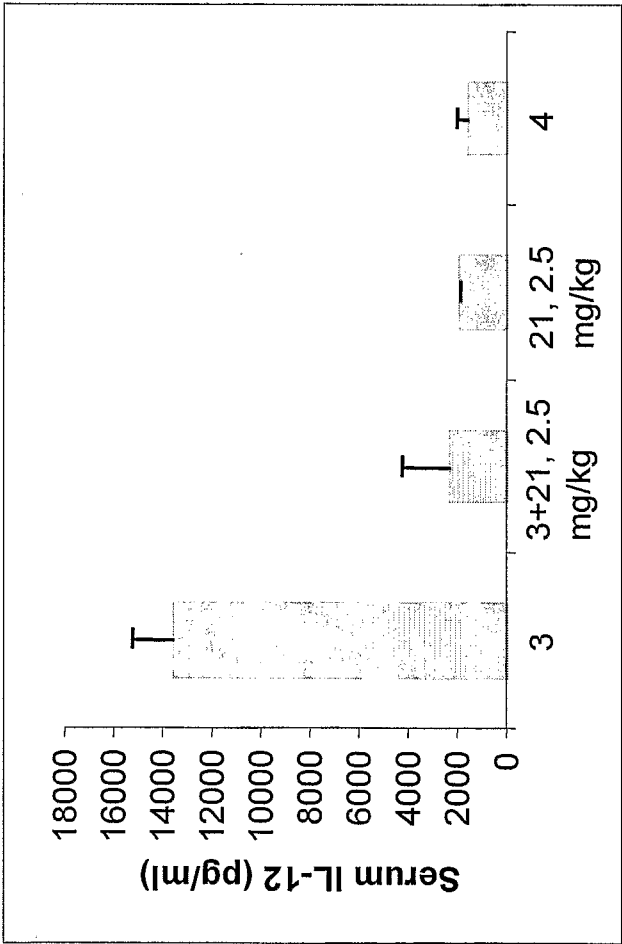


Figure 5A

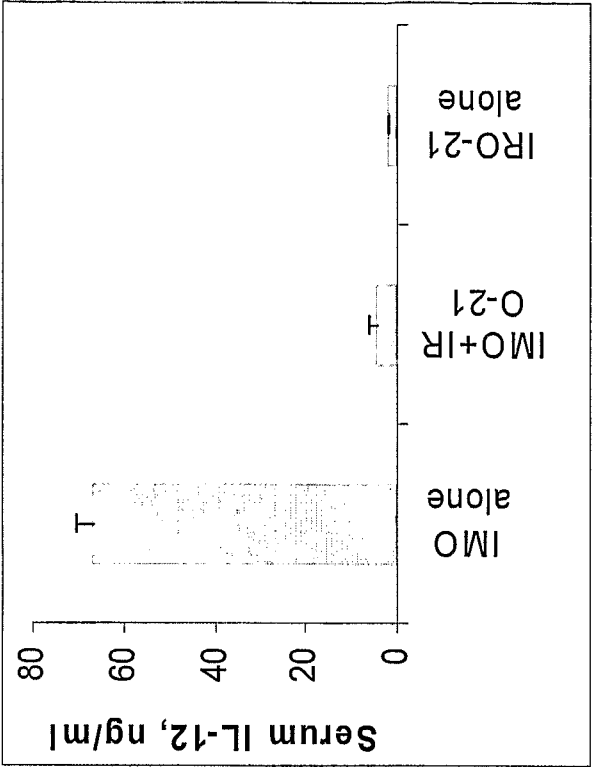
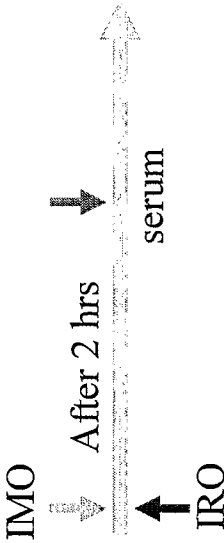
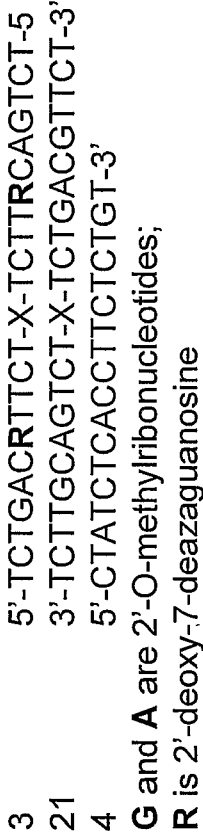
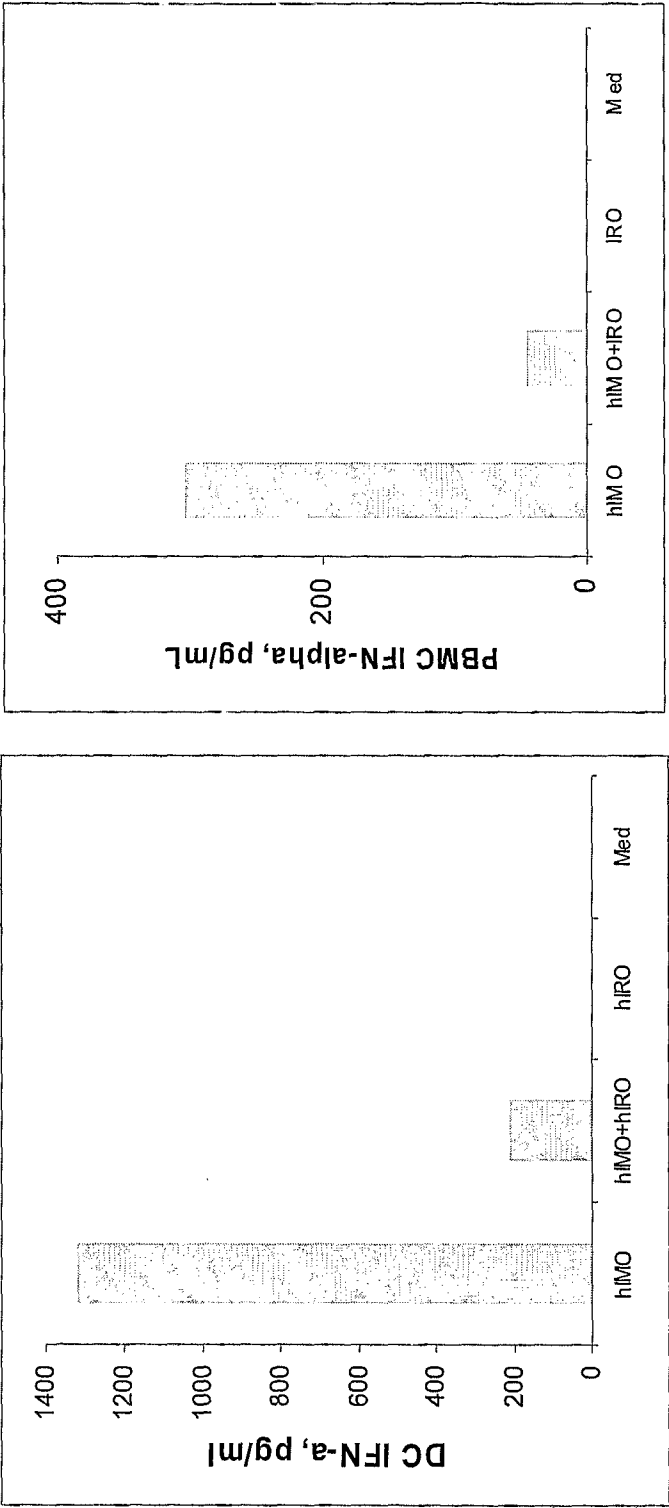


Figure 5B

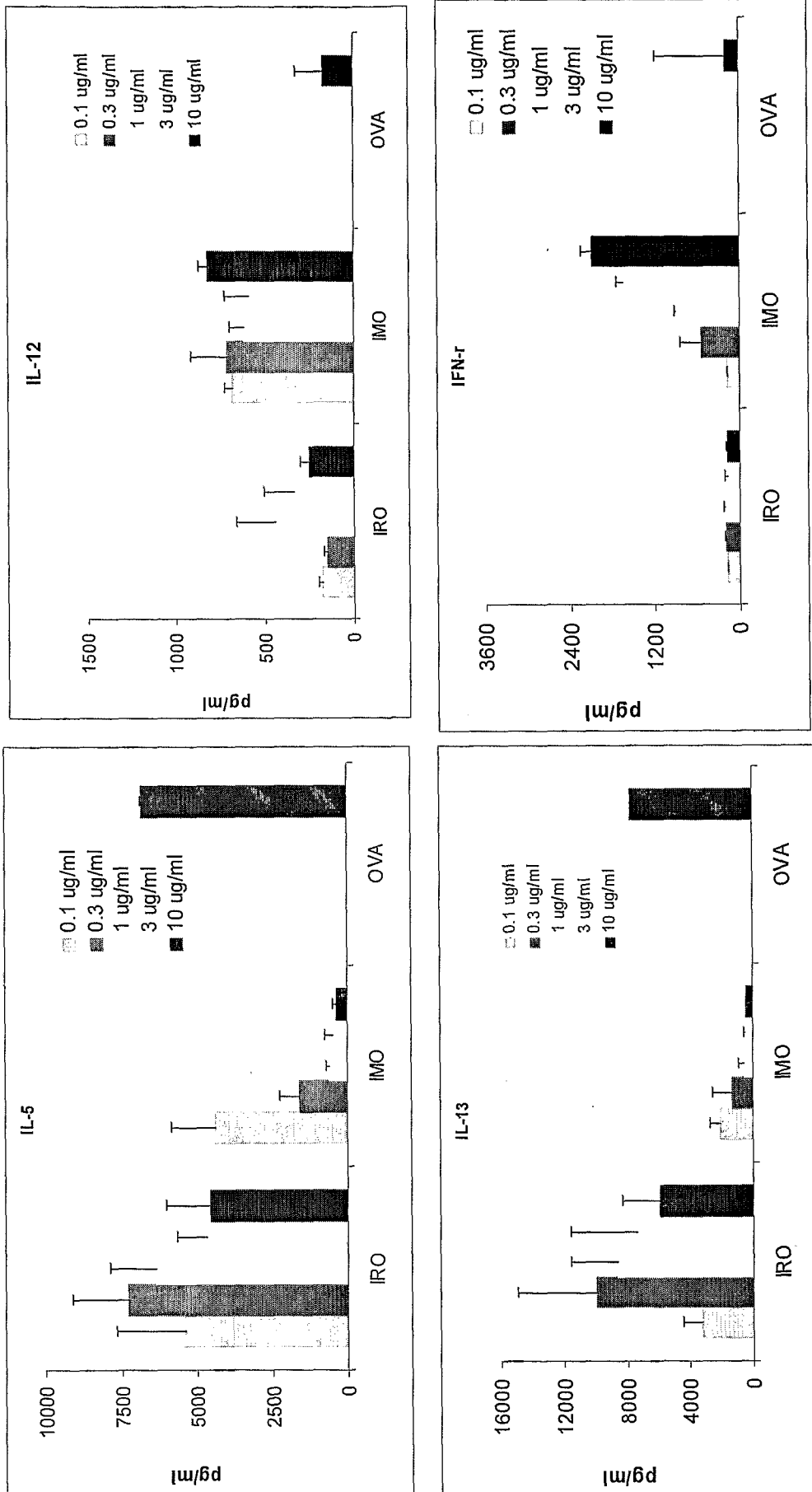




n=7, Human pDCs and PBMCs were incubated with 10 ug IMO and 40 ug IRO for 24 hr

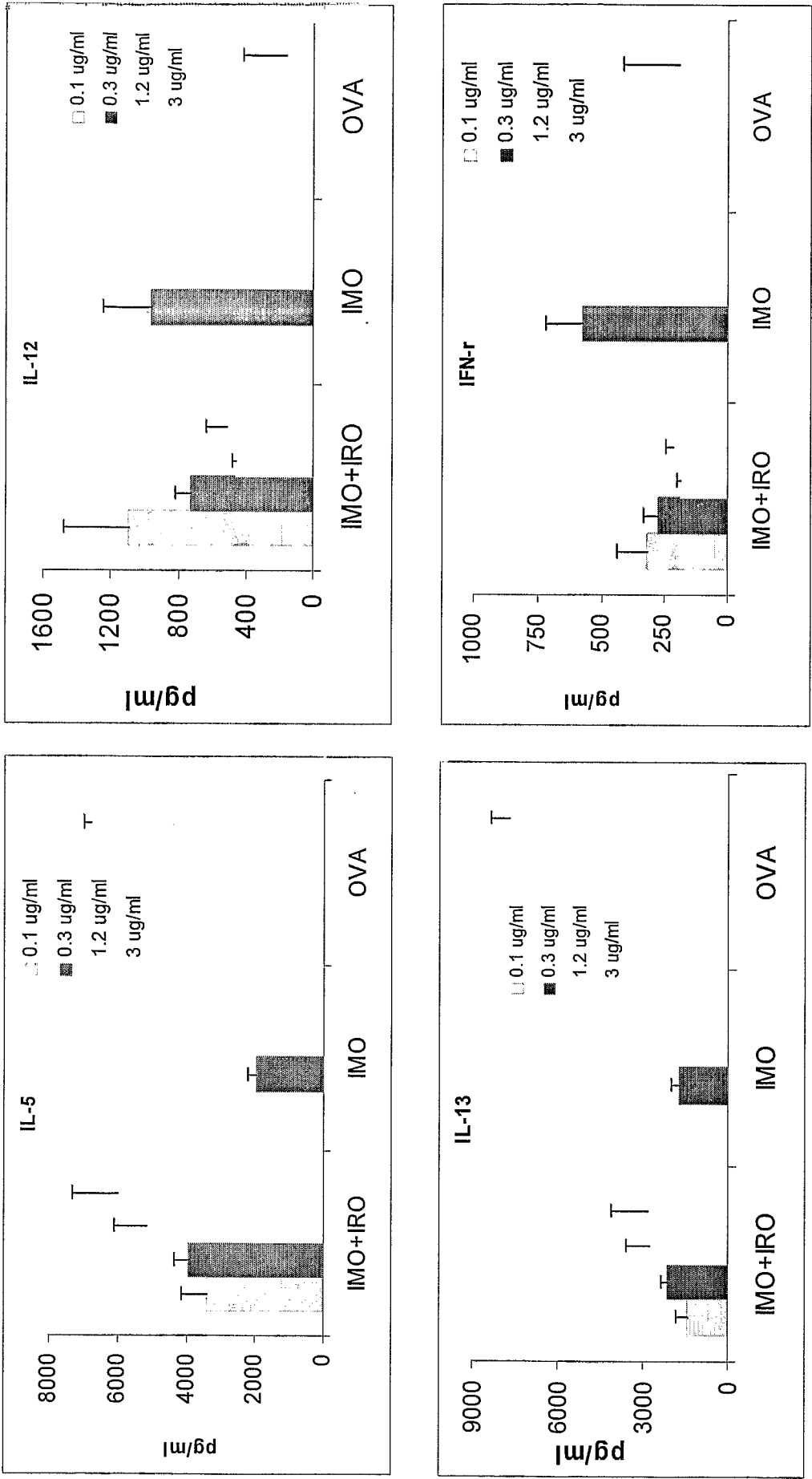
hIMO = 2 5'-CTATCTGTCGTTCTCTGT-3'
hIRO = 10 5'-CTATCT**G**UCGTTCTCTGT-3'
Nucleotides shown in bold are 2'-O-methylribonucleotides

Figure 6



IMO = 1 5'-CTATCTGACGTTCTCTGT-3'
 IRO = 5 5'-CTATCT**G**ACGTTCTCTGT-3'
 Nucleotides shown in bold are 2'-O-methylribonucleotides

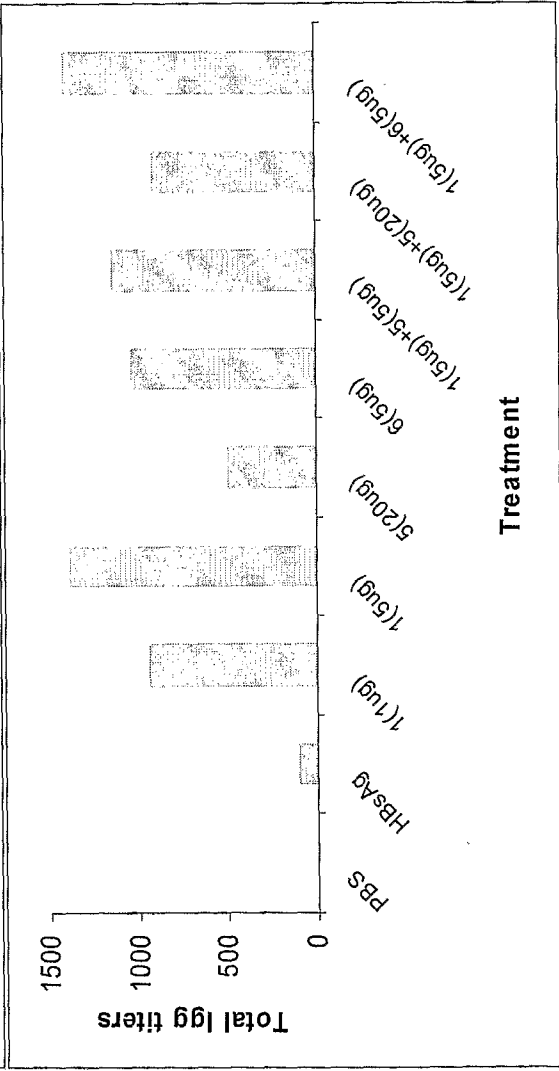
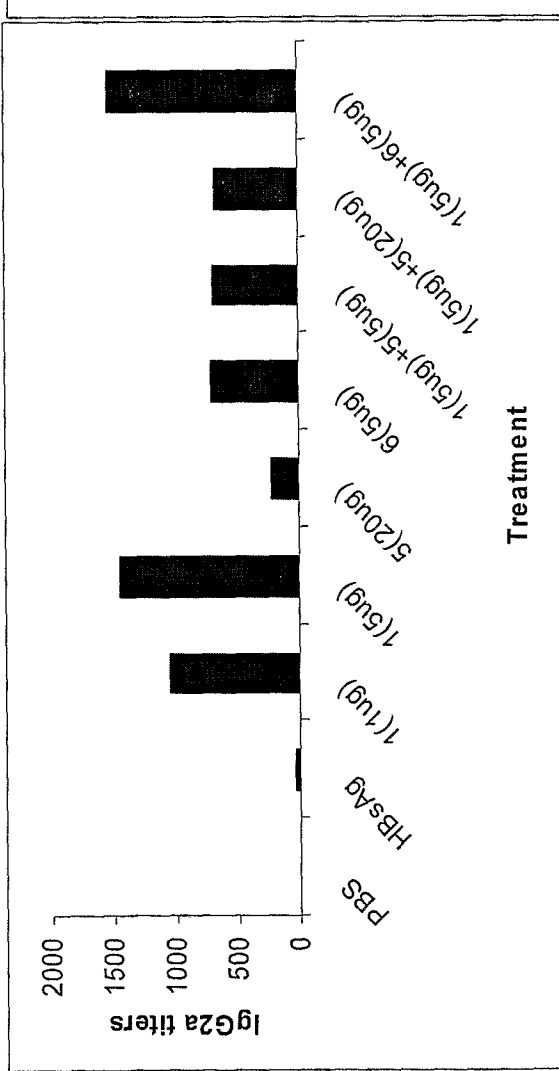
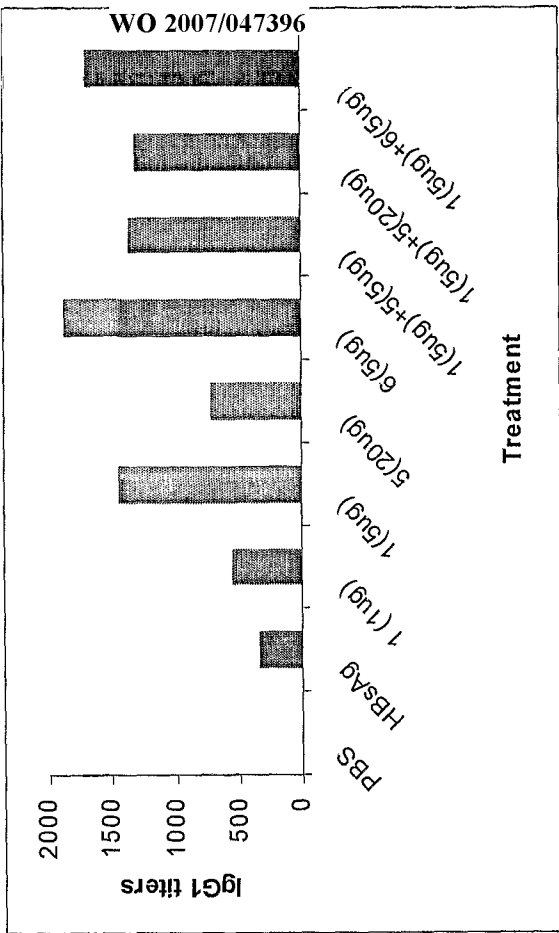
Figure 7



IMO = 1 5'-CTATCTGACGTTCTCTGT-3'
IRO = 5 5'-CTATCT**G**ACGTTCTCTGT-3'
Nucleotides shown in bold are 2'-O-methylribonucleotides

Figure 8

Figure 9



- 1 5'-CTATCTGACGTTCTCTGT-3'
- 5 5'-CTATCT**G**ACGTTCTCTGT-3'
- 6 5'-CTATCTGACG**U**UCTCTGT-3'

Nucleotides shown in bold are 2'-O-methylribonucleotides

Short-term antagonist activity

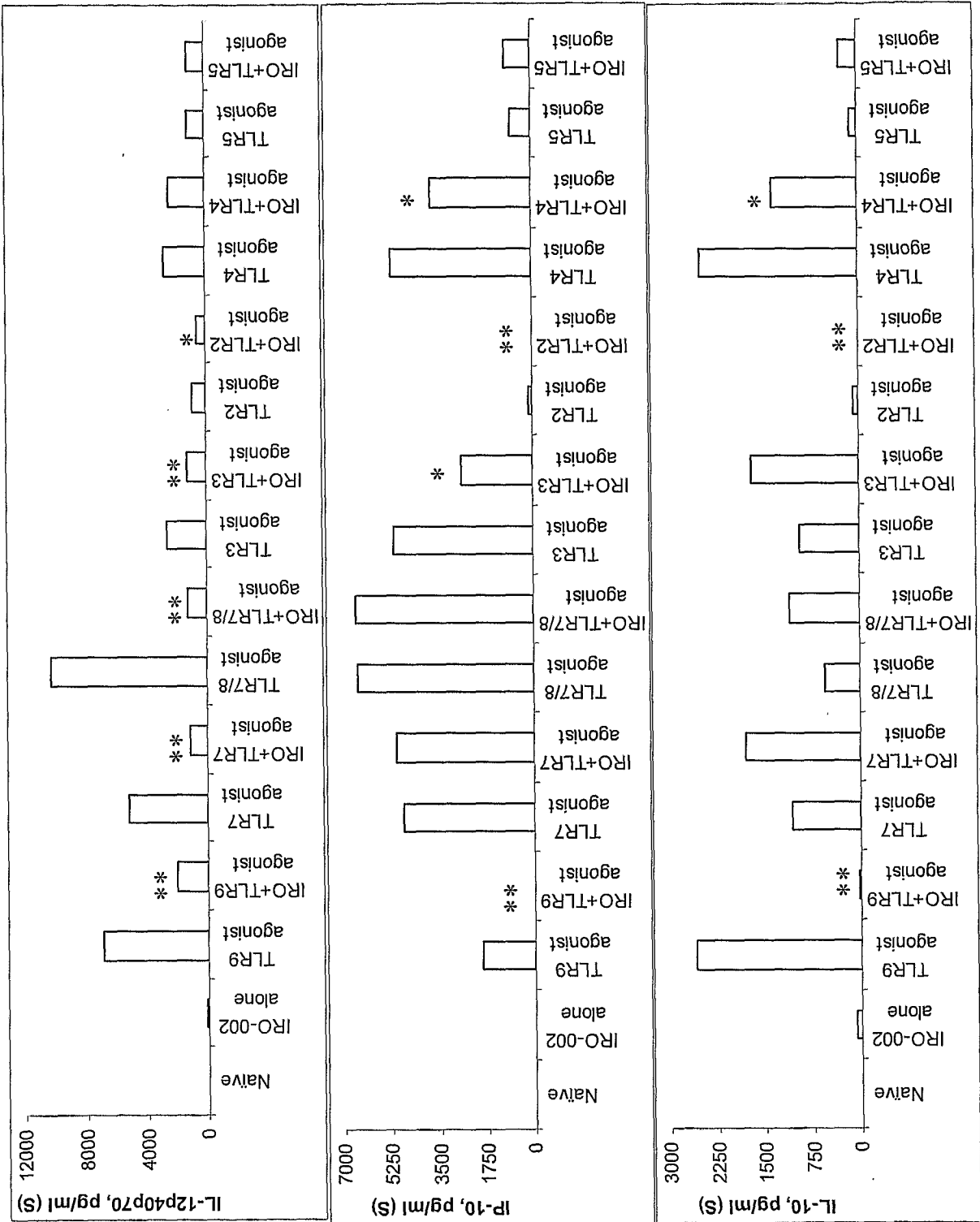


Figure 10.
* 25-50% inhibition
** >50% inhibition

Short-term antagonist activity

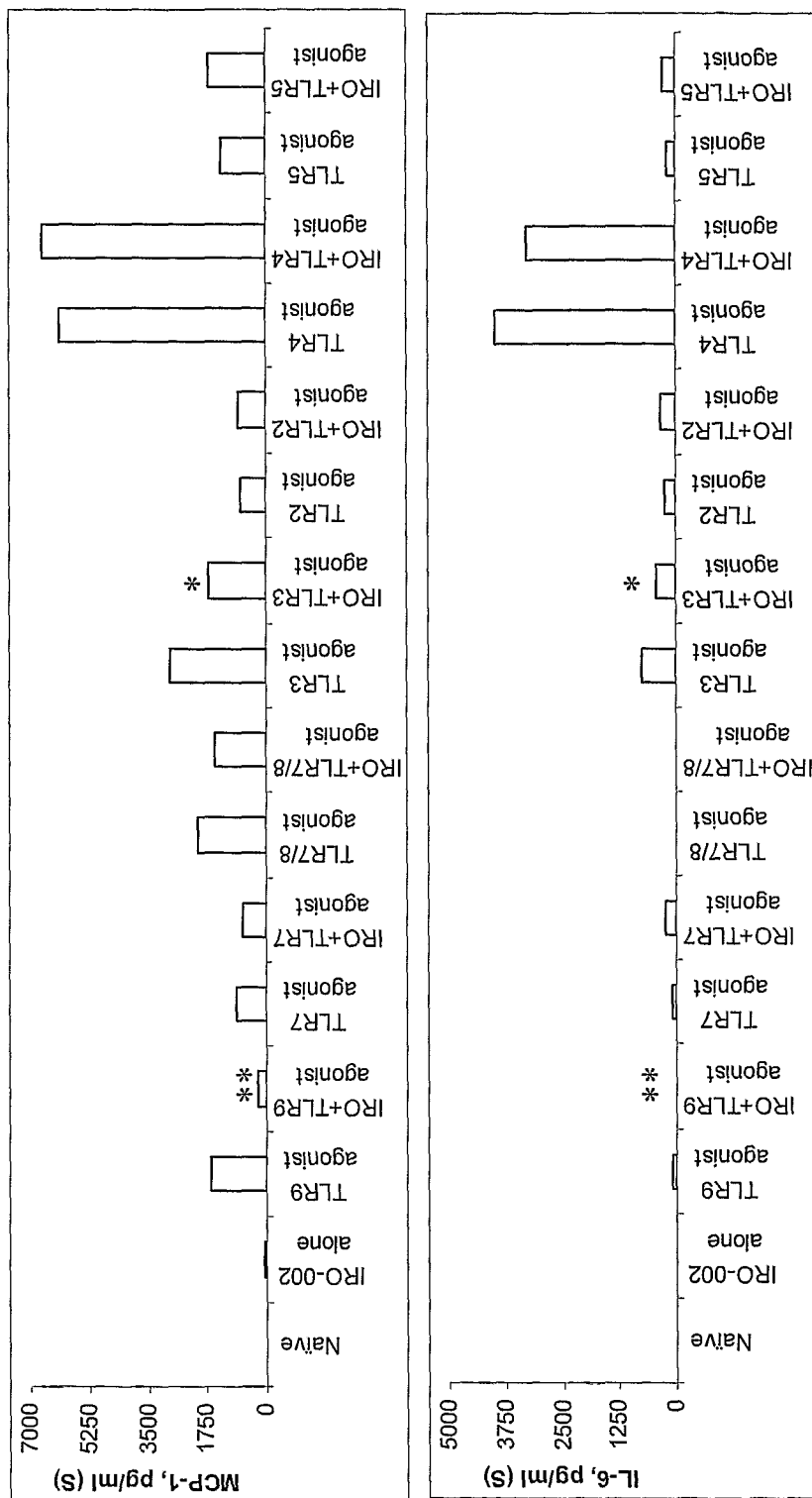


Figure 11.

* 25-50% inhibition
 ** >50% inhibition

Short-term antagonist activity

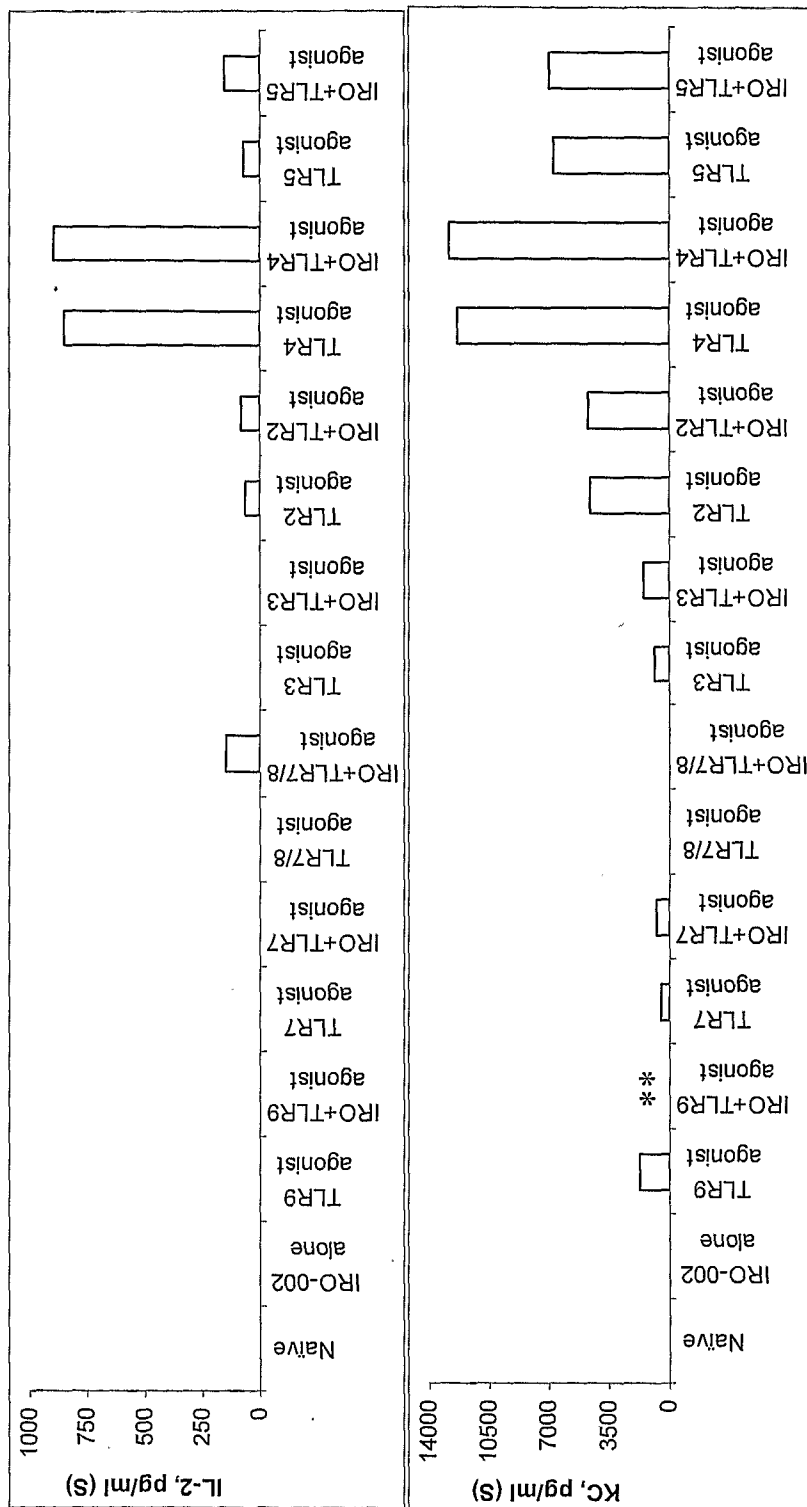


Figure 12.

* 25-50% inhibition
** >50% inhibition

Long-term antagonist activity

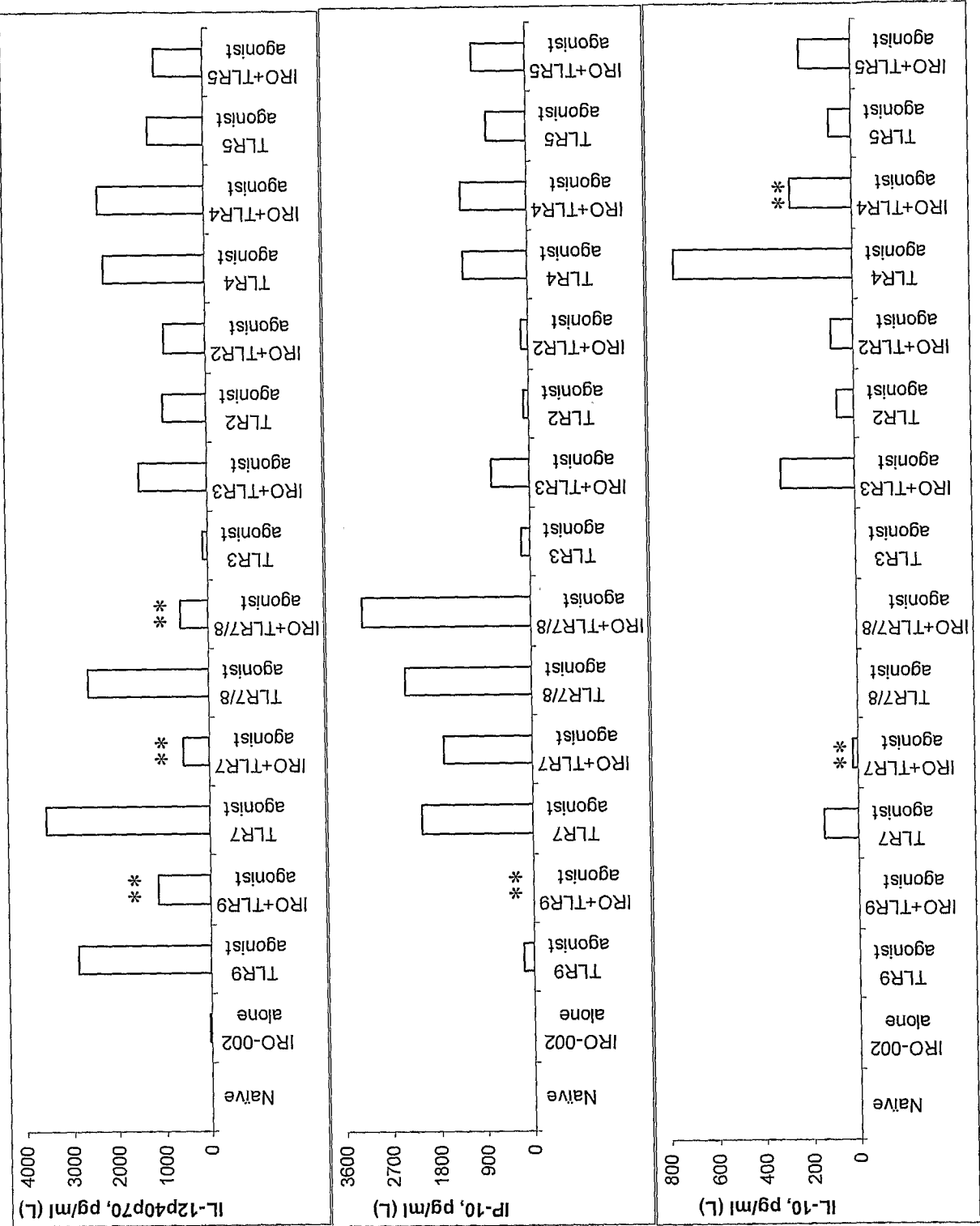


Figure 13.
* 25-50% inhibition
** >50% inhibition

Long-term antagonist activity

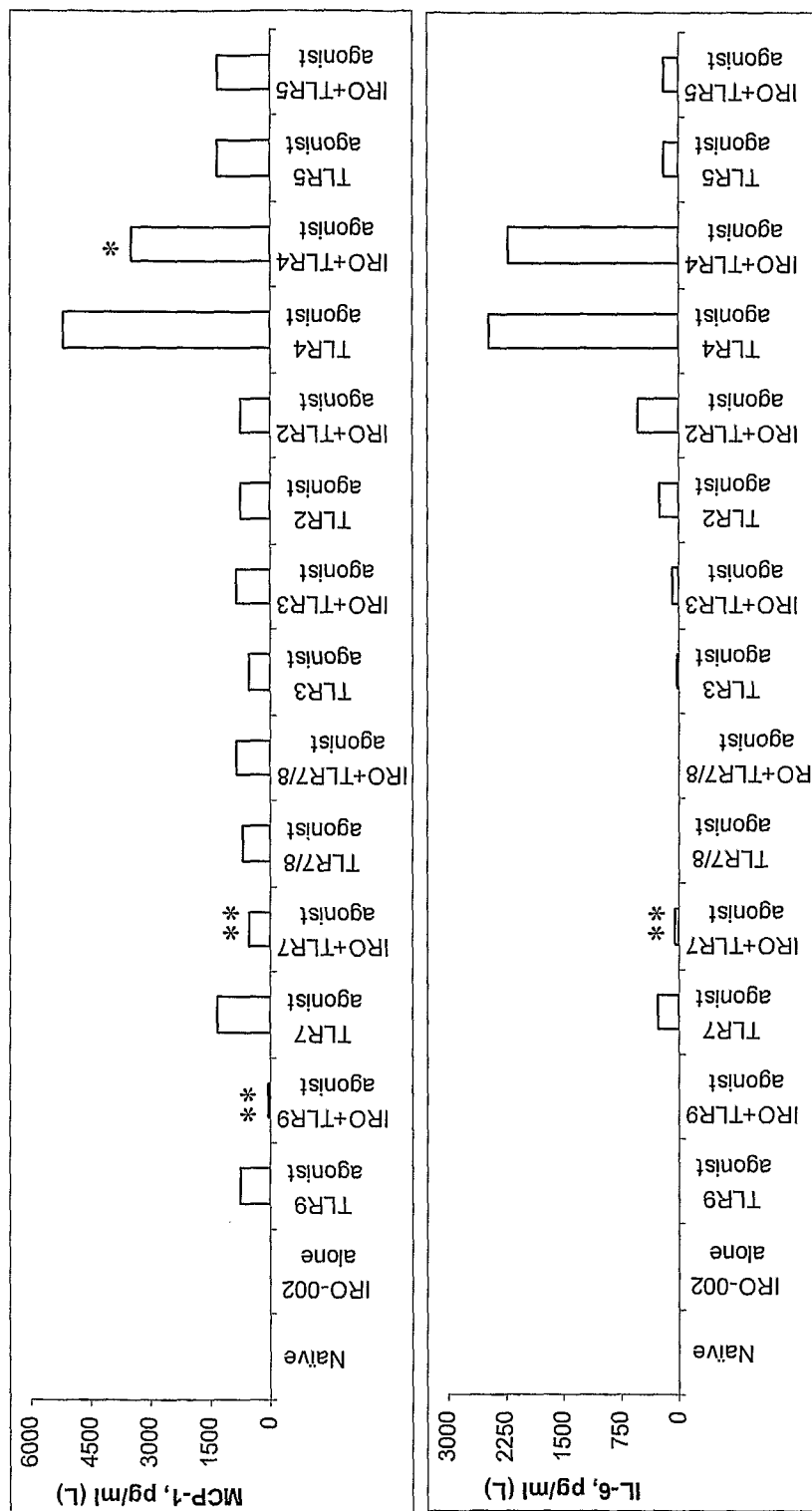


Figure 14.
 * 25-50% inhibition
 ** >50% inhibition

Long-term antagonist activity

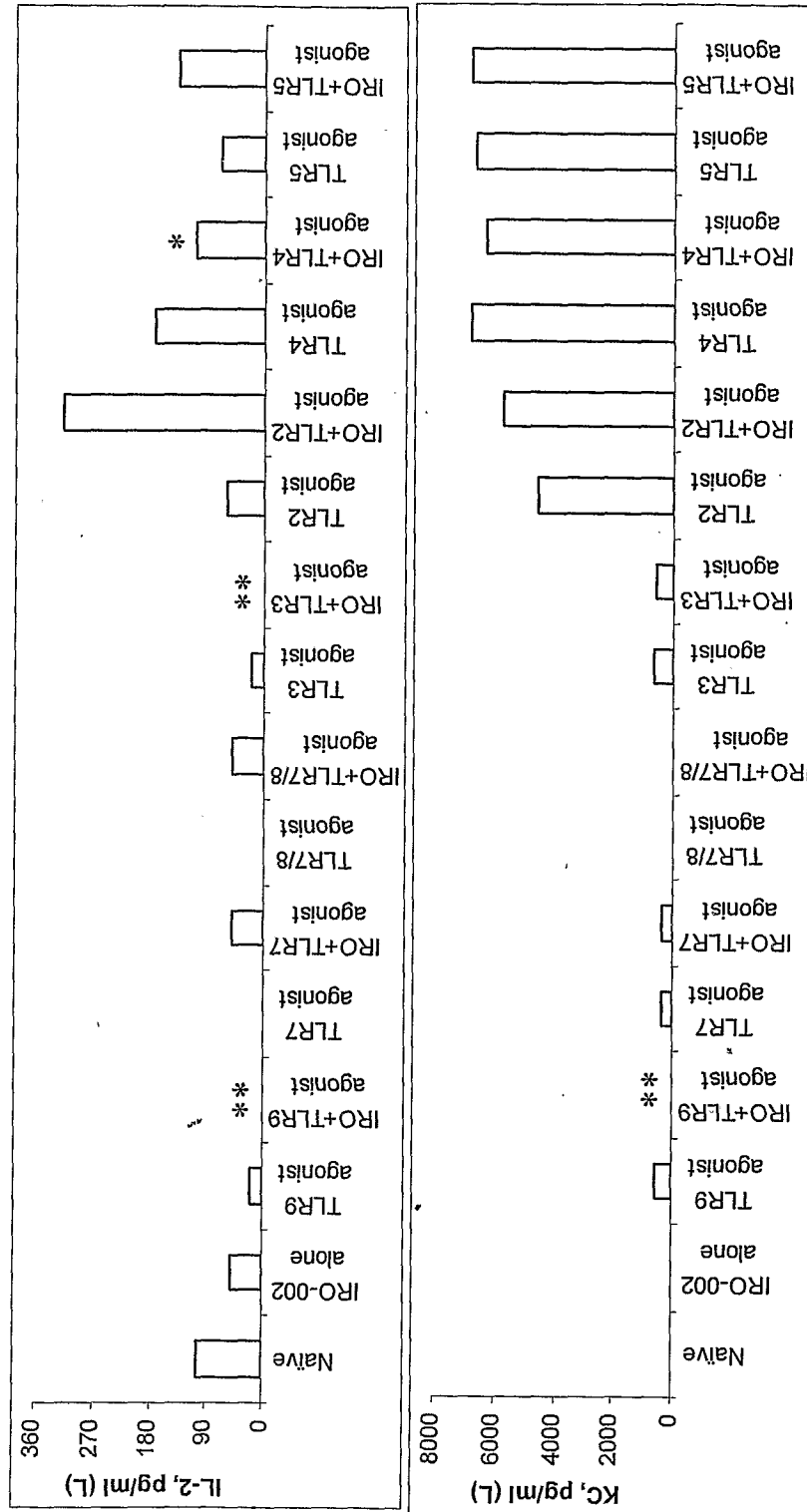


Figure 1.5
 * 25-50% inhibition
 ** >50% inhibition

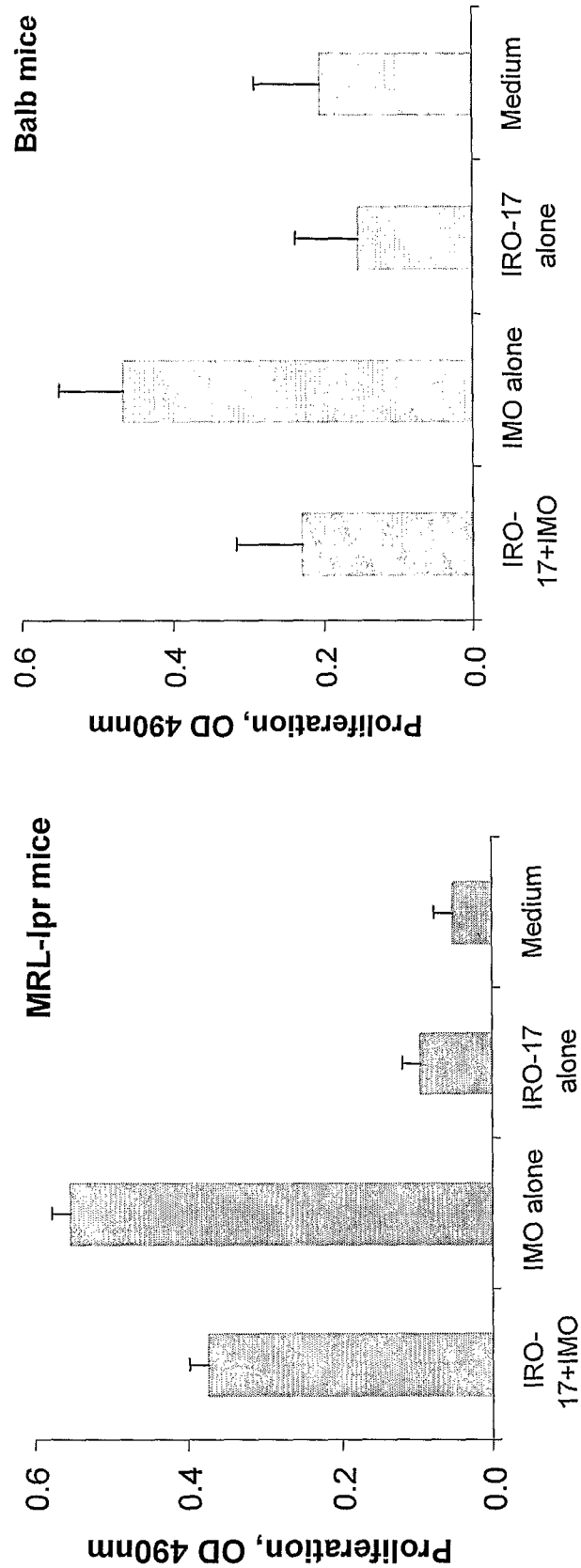


Figure 16

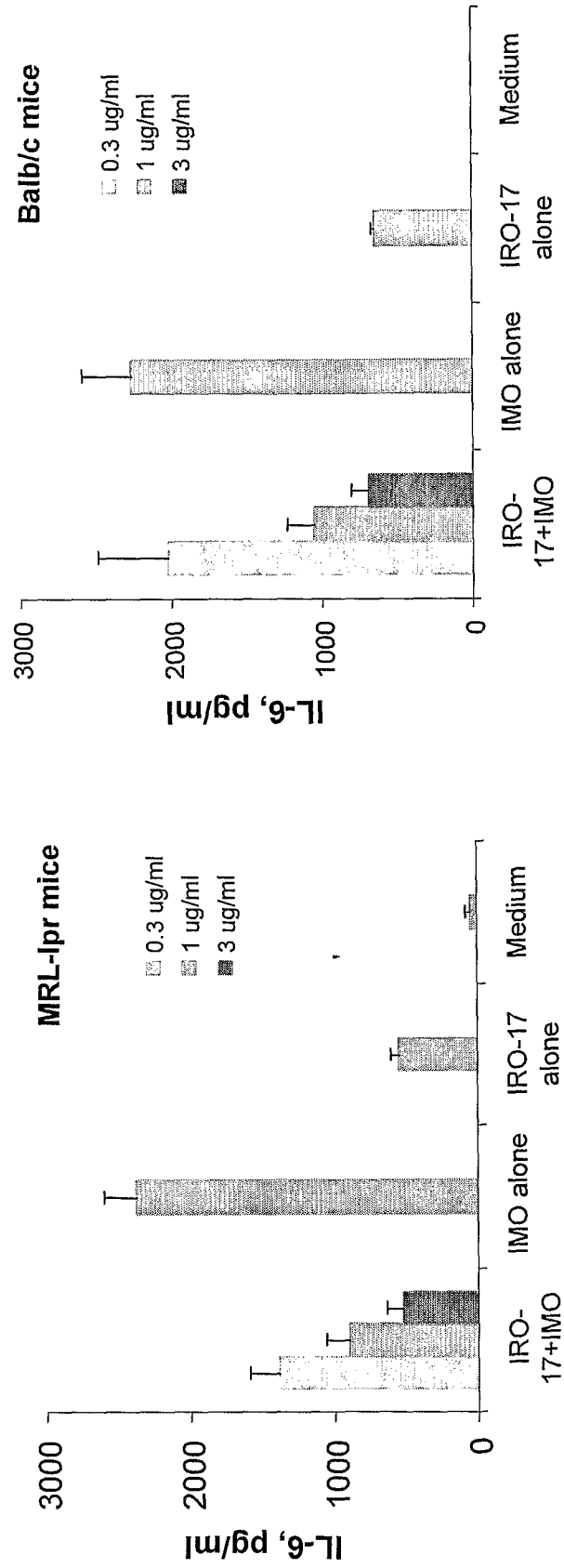


Figure 17A

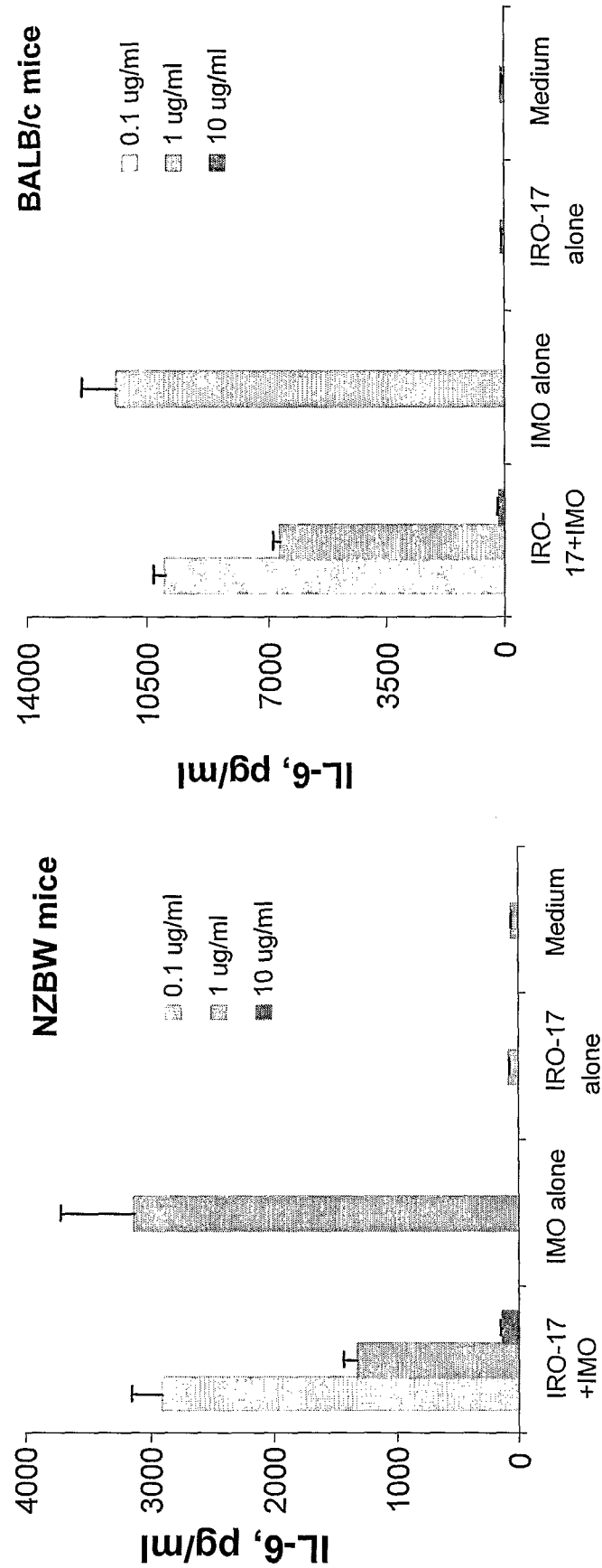


Figure 17B

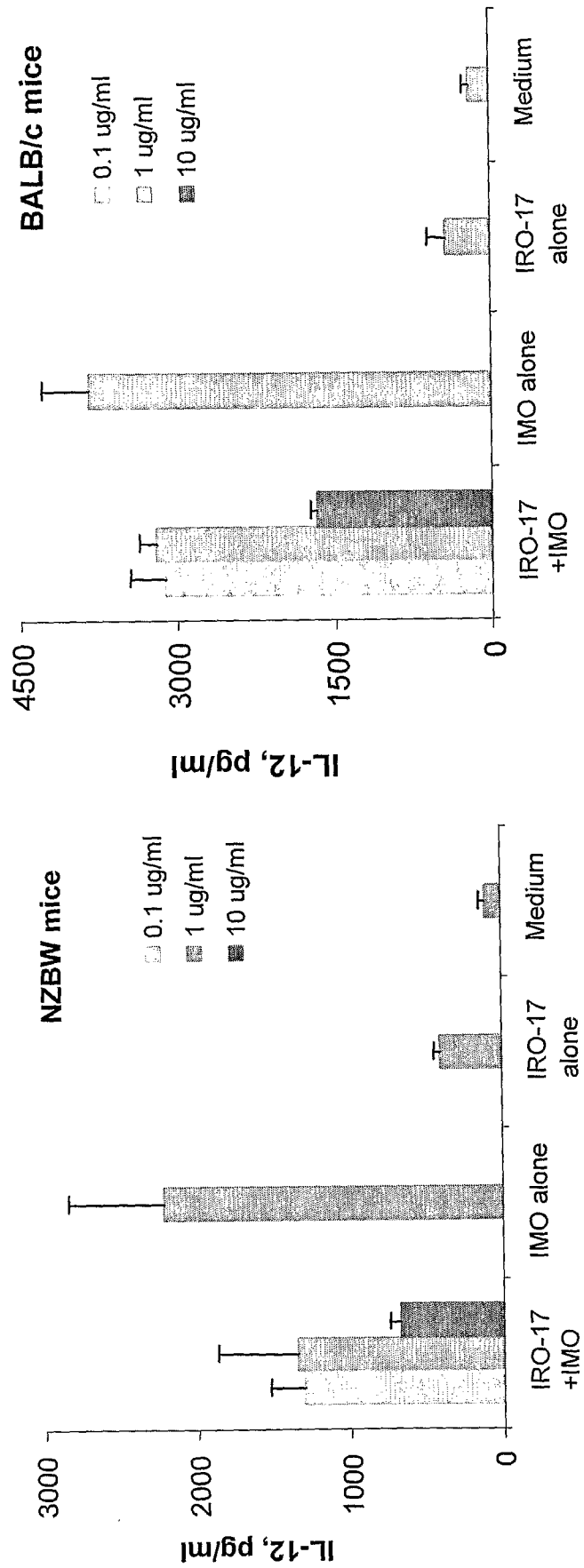


Figure 17C

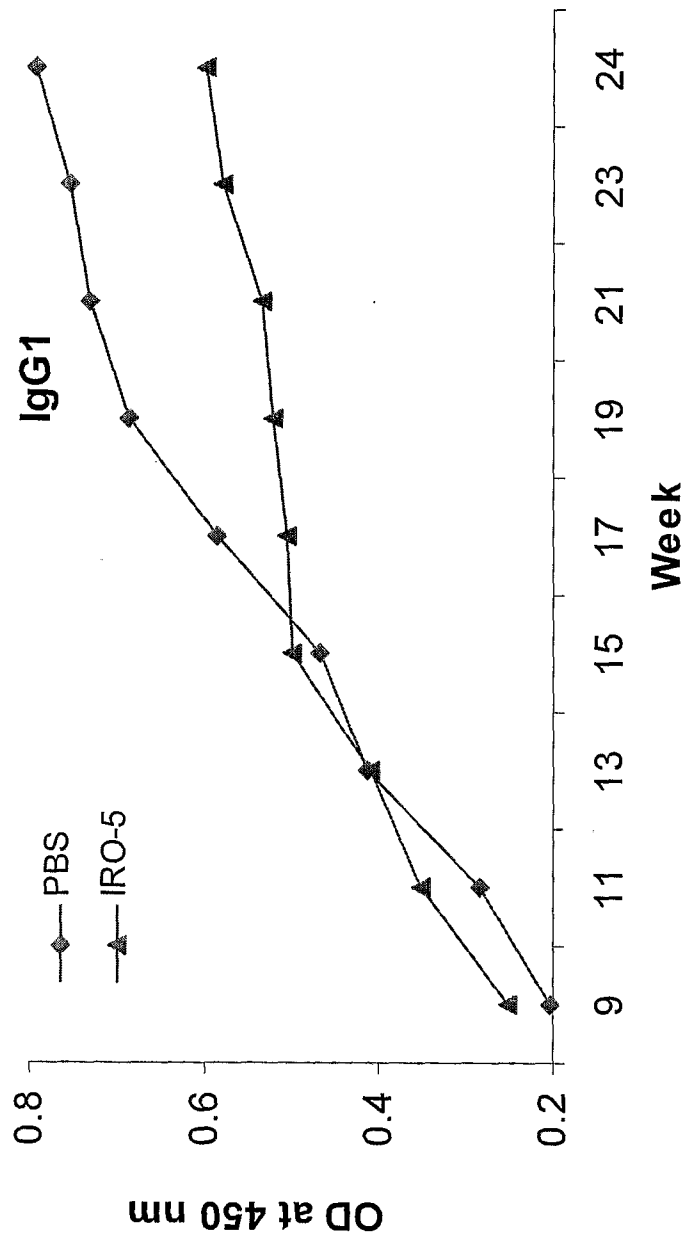


Figure 18A

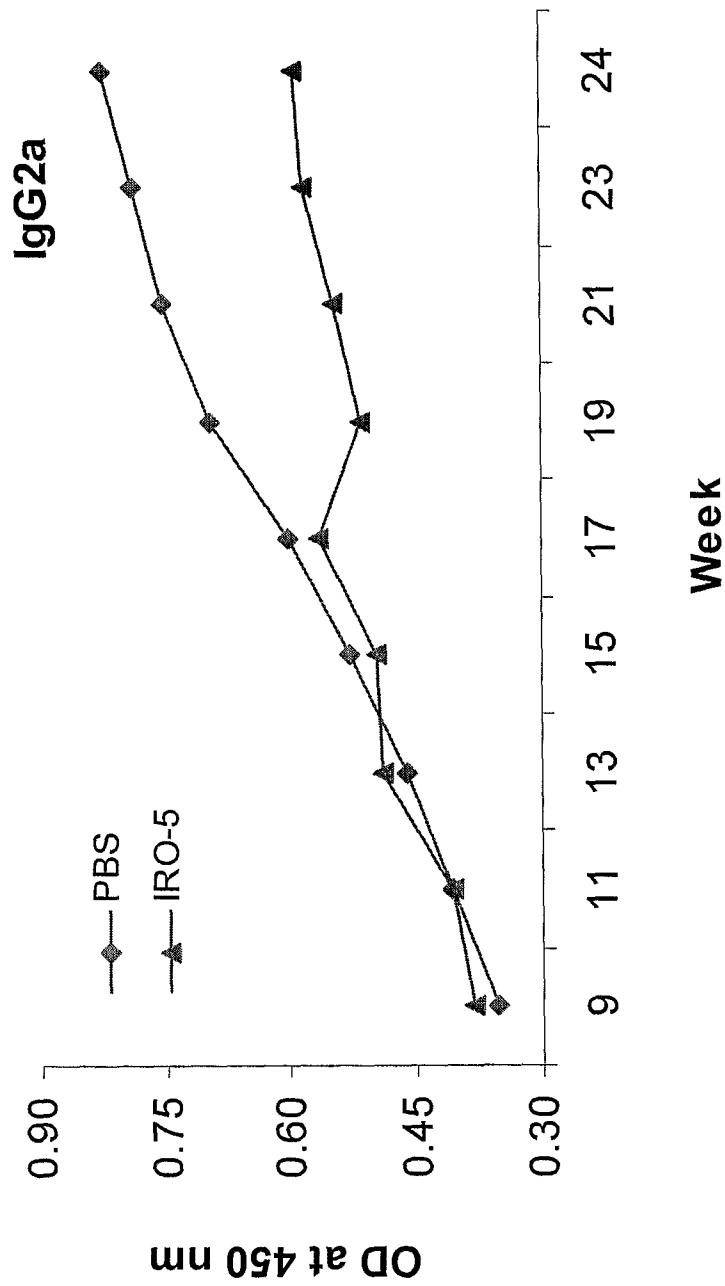


Figure 18B

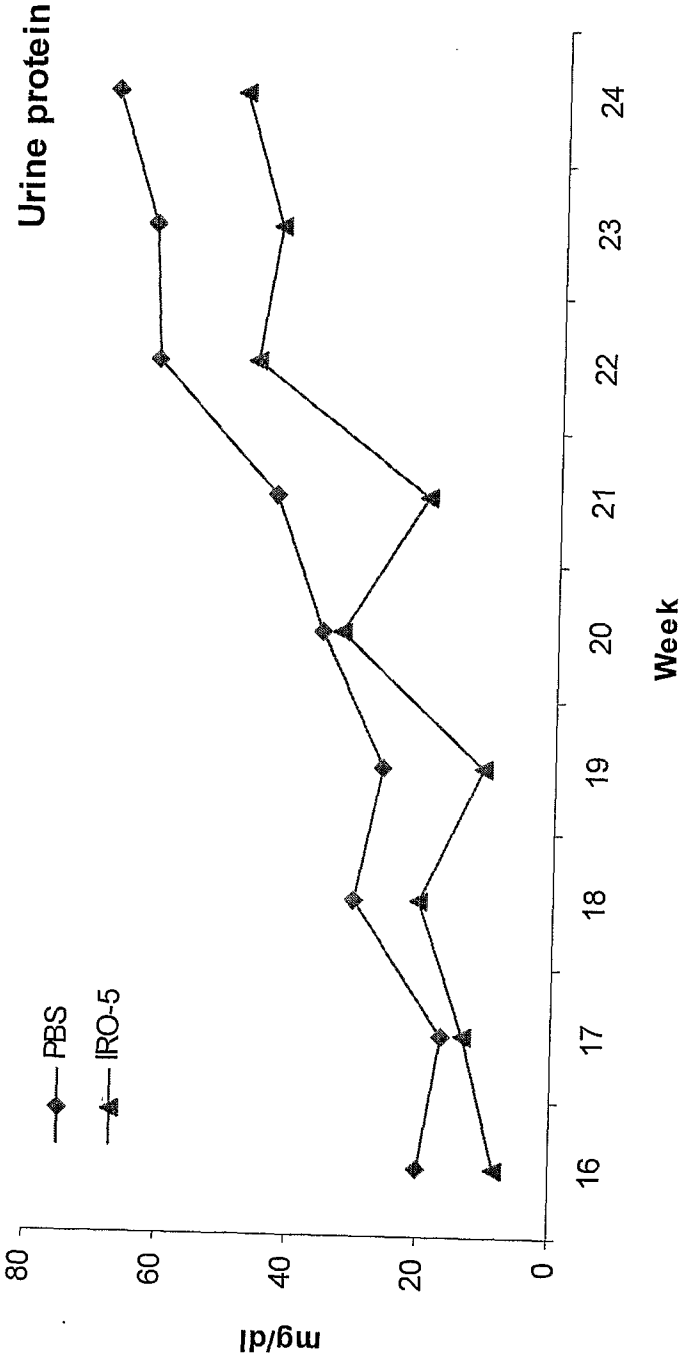


Figure 18C

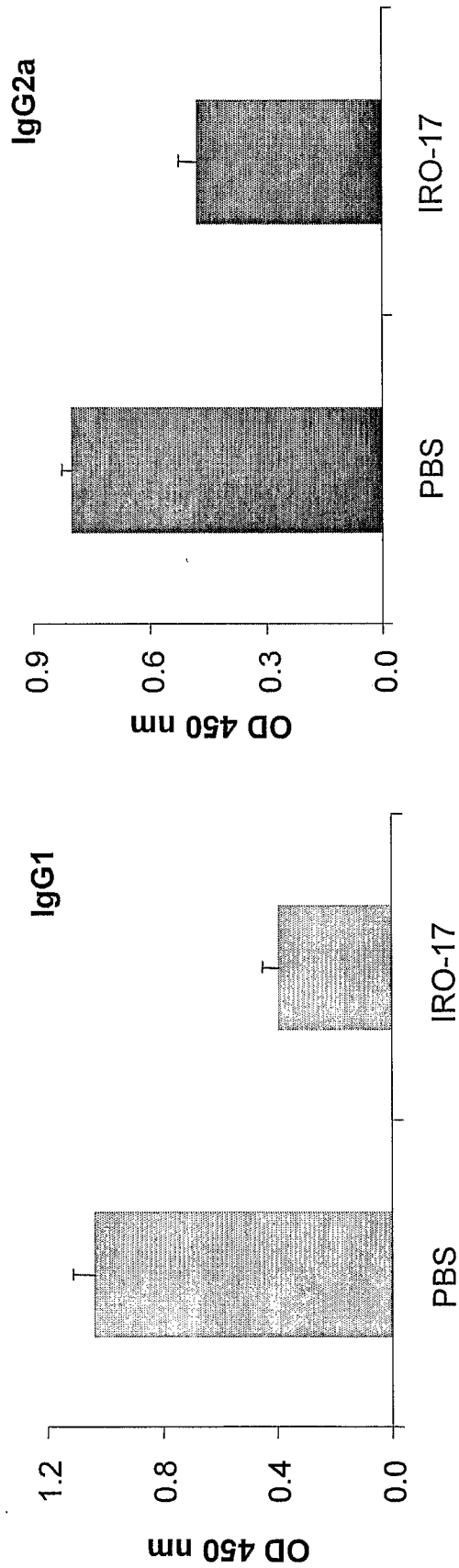


Figure 18D

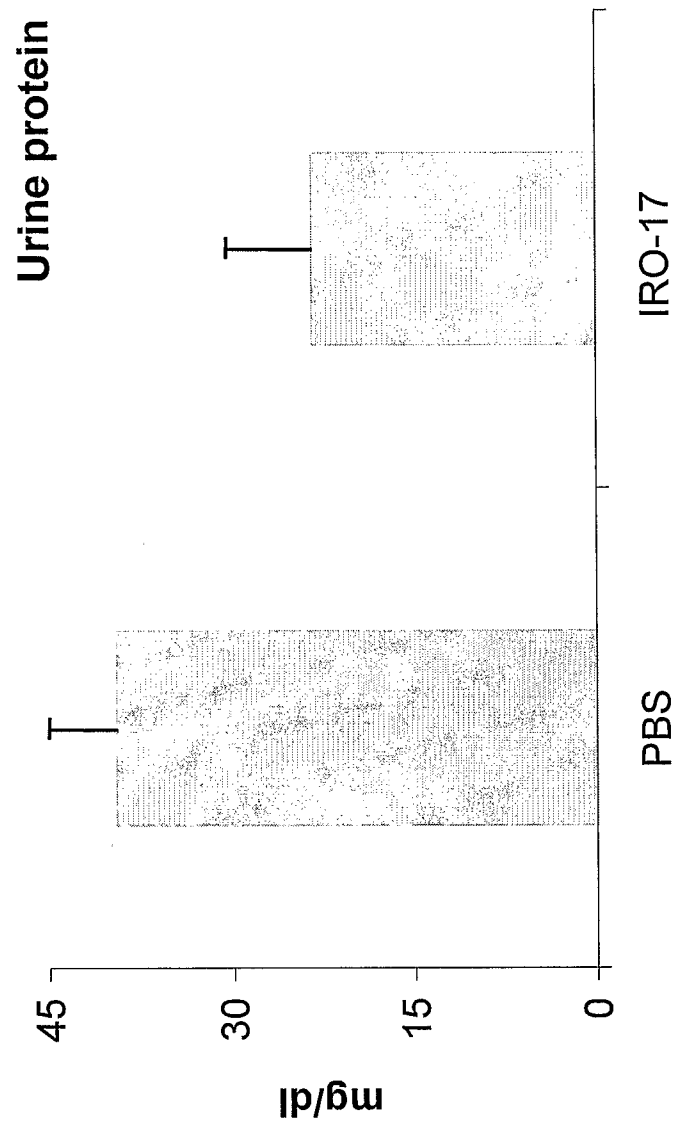


Figure 18E

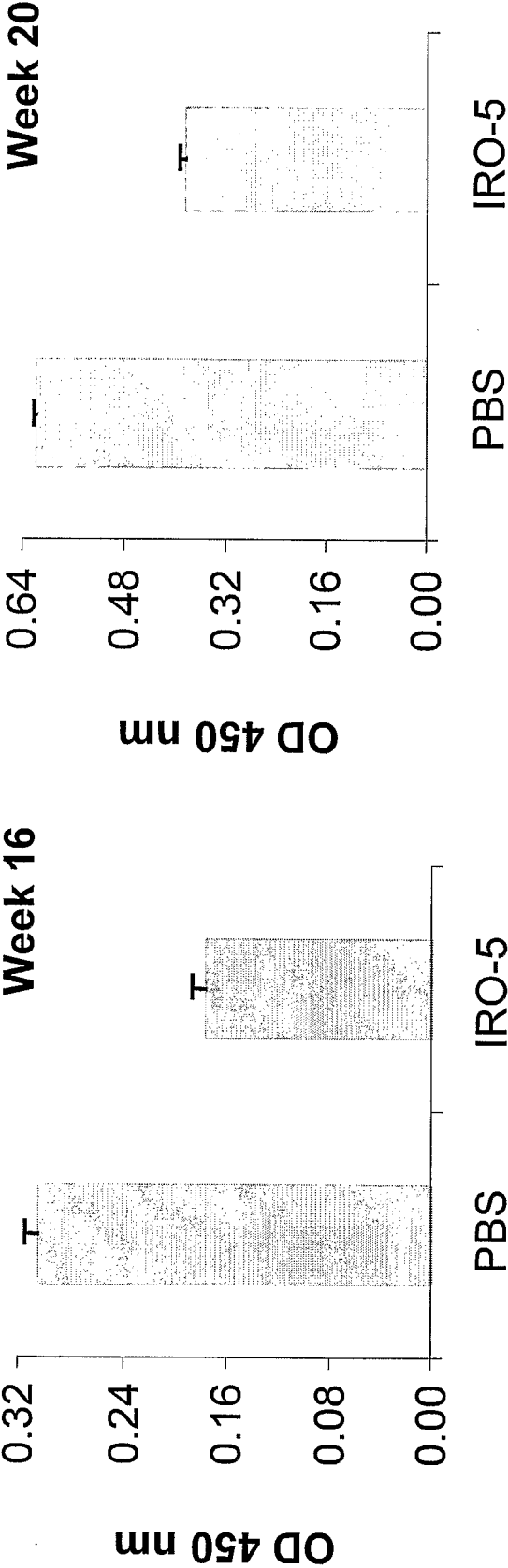


Figure 19