Steroids Alone or as Adjunctive Therapy with Doxycycline Fail to Improve Oviduct Damage in Mice Infected with Chlamydia Muridarum

Running Title: Steroids in Chlamydial Genital Tract Infection

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ABSTRACT

In women, *Chlamydia trachomatis* can ascend from the cervix to the Fallopian tubes where an overly aggressive host inflammatory response can cause scarring that leads to chronic pelvic pain, infertility, or ectopic pregnancy. Although screening and treatment programs for women have resulted in decreased rates of sequelae, morbidities associated with oviduct scarring continue to occur. Since corticosteroids possess anti-inflammatory and anti-fibrotic effects, we tested the ability of dexamethasone to inhibit inflammation and prevent oviduct scarring in mice genitally infected with *Chlamydia muridarum*. Administration of 1 or 2.5 mg/kg of dexamethasone on days 7-21 of infection resulted in reduced accumulation of inflammatory cells in the oviducts when compared to controls. However, a concomitant increase in bacterial burden was observed and chronic oviduct disease was not reduced. Adjunctive administration of a prolonged (21 days) or short course (3 days) of dexamethasone in combination with the antibiotic doxycycline also failed to reduce chronic oviduct pathology when compared to antibiotic treatment alone. Steroids administered alone or adjunctively with antibiotics failed to prevent oviduct damage in the murine model of *C. trachomatis* infection.
INTRODUCTION

*Chlamydia trachomatis* is the most common sexually transmitted bacterial pathogen in the world. Infected women are at risk for pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which can lead to oviduct tissue scarring. Chronic oviduct damage may result in the morbidities of recurrent pelvic pain, infertility, and ectopic pregnancy. The study of chlamydial oviduct disease pathogenesis has long relied on macaque, guinea pig, and mouse animal models in which chlamydiae are inoculated directly into the oviduct bursa or at the level of the cervix. When the cervical route of inoculation is performed, bacteria ascend and infect the oviducts where inflammation can lead to scar formation and fluid blockade resulting in hydrosalpinx development, similar to what is observed in women. Subcutaneous depot forms of progesterone are frequently used in mice to enhance initial infection rates by halting the estrus cycle\(^1,2,3\). However, even in the absence of progesterone pretreatment, the majority of infected mice of multiple genetic backgrounds sustain severe oviduct disease after infection\(^4\).

Studies in the murine model have demonstrated that soon after infection, mucosal epithelial cells and resident innate immune cells release inflammatory cytokines and chemokines. These molecules lead to an influx of neutrophils and monocytes that release tissue-damaging molecules such as matrix metalloproteinases and IL-1 (reviewed in Darville and Hiltke\(^5\)). The intensity of neutrophil influx into the oviduct (pyosalpinx) correlates directly with eventual development of hydrosalpinx\(^6\). Soon after neutrophil infiltration, recruited CD4\(^+\) T cells secreting IFN-\(\gamma\) promote resolution of infection and protection from oviduct damage\(^5,7,8,9\). CD8\(^+\) T cells also contribute to resolution of infection through their production of IFN-\(\gamma\)^10, but these cells can also promote oviduct damage through their production of TNF-\(\alpha\)^11.
Doxycycline effectively kills *Chlamydia* in the murine model of chlamydial genital tract infection. In fact, early antibiotic treatment of mice can significantly reduce the rate of hydrosalpinx\(^9,12\), and multiple human studies reveal that screening and treatment programs lead to reduced rates of PID and infertility\(^{13,14,15,16,17}\). Antibiotic treatment early after cervical infection may completely prevent ascension of chlamydiae to the Fallopian tubes or lead to a rapid resolution of oviduct infection. However, due to the asymptomatic nature of most chlamydial infections, they are often prolonged and many go untreated\(^{18,19,20}\). Since an effective vaccine is not available, treatment regimens that inhibit tissue damage caused by injurious components of the host inflammatory response are urgently needed.

A multitude of clinical studies have established the beneficial effects of steroid therapy for inflammatory and infectious disorders (reviewed in Aberdein, et al\(^{21}\)). Steroids are potent anti-inflammatory agents that work via a variety of mechanisms including suppression of proinflammatory cytokines; increased transcription of anti-inflammatory proteins; and inhibition of neutrophil adhesion, chemotaxis, and phagocytosis\(^{22,23}\). They are also potent inhibitors of T cell growth, proliferation, and differentiation and can signal T cell apoptosis\(^{23}\), which is potentially problematic in regards to chlamydial infection where CD4\(^+\) T cells play an essential role in resolution of infection\(^7,11,24,25\). In addition to use as a single-agent therapy, the adjunctive use of steroids with antibiotics has been demonstrated to improve outcomes in a variety of infectious disorders such as acute pyelonephritis\(^{26}\) and tuberculous meningitis\(^{27}\). Relevant to prevention of oviduct scarring, steroids have been shown to inhibit and even reverse fibrotic changes in a number of inflammatory diseases\(^{28,29,30,31}\).

In this study, we initially sought to determine if administration of dexamethasone alone during *C. muridarum* genital infection might protect the oviduct from scar formation. We
examined the effects of dexamethasone treatment on infection course, inflammatory response, and chronic oviduct tissue pathology. In addition, we sought to determine whether the administration of steroids as adjunctive therapy with the antibiotic doxycycline would result in preservation of oviduct structure and reduction of hydrosalpinx after murine genital tract infection.

**MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Strains, cell lines, and culture conditions.** Plaque-purified *Chlamydia muridarum* strain Nigg was propagated and titrated in L929 cells as previously described. Bacteria were titrated as inclusion forming units (IFU) using fluorescently tagged anti-chlamydial lipopolysaccharide monoclonal antibody (Bio-Rad, Hercules, CA).

**Mice.** Eight-week-old female C3H/HeOuJ or C57BL/6 mice were purchased from Jackson Laboratories (Bar Harbor, ME) and maintained in the animal facilities at the research center of Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh. These two murine strains were chosen based on previous data that revealed enhanced chronic oviduct disease risk in C3H/HeOuJ mice but increased early neutrophil infiltration in C57BL/6 mice. Mice were given food and water *ad libitum* in an environmentally-controlled room with 12-hour light/dark cycle. All animal experiments were performed according to the institutional policies for animal health and were approved by the University Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee.

**Chlamydia infection and monitoring.** Five days prior to infection, mice were treated subcutaneously with 2.5 mg of medroxyprogesterone (Depo-Provera®, Upjohn, Kalamazoo, MI).
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...to induce a stage of anestrous in order to facilitate successful infection. Anesthetized mice were intravaginally inoculated with 1x10^5 IFUs of *C. muridarum* in 30 µl of sucrose-sodium phosphate-glutamic acid (SPG) buffer [250 mM sucrose, 10 mM sodium phosphate, 5 mM L-glutamic acid (pH 7.2)]. Mice were monitored for cervicovaginal shedding via endocervical swabs, and IFUs were calculated as previously described. Oviduct bacterial burden was determined by culturing oviduct homogenates on L929 cells and titrating by plaque assay or by polymerase chain reaction for *C. muridarum* 16s ribosomal RNA. The chlamydial load in the oviducts of each mouse, expressed as genome equivalents, was extrapolated from a standard curve generated using a 16s rRNA-amplified PCR product of known concentration and adjusted for the presence of two copies of the gene in *C. muridarum*. Separate groups of 10 mice of each strain were euthanized 42 days post mock-infection as controls for histopathology.

**Dexamethasone treatment.** In our initial experiment (Fig 1, experiment 1), groups of C3H/HeOuJ mice (N=5 per group) were given intraperitoneal (IP) dexamethasone (Sigma-Aldrich) in 100 µl of phosphate buffered saline (PBS) in doses of 0.05, 0.5, 1, or 2.5 mg/kg per day or IP PBS alone on days 7-21 of infection. Initial dexamethasone dosing was based on previous literature that demonstrated ranges of effective anti-inflammatory doses in rodent models. Mice were euthanized on day 21 and oviduct histopathology was compared between the groups. Decreased oviduct inflammation and necrosis was observed in the groups treated with 1 and 2.5 mg/kg of dexamethasone, and thus, these doses were chosen for further study. In the two subsequent steroid treatment protocols (Fig 1, experiments 2 and 3), groups of C57BL/6 and C3H/HeOuJ mice (N=10 per group) were given 1 or 2.5 mg/kg per day of dexamethasone in 100 µl of PBS or PBS alone via IP injection on days 7-11 for C57BL/6 or on days 7-14 for...
C3H/HeOuJ mice. Five C57BL/6 mice were euthanized on day 11 and five C3H/HeOuJ mice were euthanized on day 14. Genital tract tissues were harvested and oviducts were homogenized and analyzed for leukocyte influx, matrix metalloprotease-9 (MMP-9), and bacterial burden. The remaining five mice of each strain continued steroid treatment through day 21 and were then euthanized on day 42 to evaluate chronic oviduct pathology.

In an adjunctive steroid treatment protocol (Fig. 1, experiment 4), groups of C3H/HeOuJ mice (N=5 per group) were given 2.5, 5, or 10 mg/kg per day of dexamethasone IP on days 3-16 with a steroid taper on days 17-23 for concerns of adrenal suppression following high-dose steroids in addition to 10 mg/kg per day of doxycycline IP on days 17-21, and a control group received 10 mg/kg per day of doxycycline alone on days 17-21. In order to maximize the anti-inflammatory properties in the oviduct as bacteria ascend, steroid administration was started earlier in this treatment protocol. Mice were euthanized on day 42 and their oviducts were harvested for histopathology. Lastly, a short-course, adjunctive steroid treatment protocol was performed because of suggestion of immunosuppression with the longer, two-week steroid regimen (Fig. 1, experiments 5 and 6). Groups of C3H/HeOuJ (N=5 per group) or C57BL/6 mice (N=15 per group) were given 2.5 mg/kg/day of dexamethasone IP on days 14-16 (C3H/HeOuJ) or days 11-13 (C57BL/6) together with 10 mg/kg/day of doxycycline IP on days 14-18 (C3H/HeOuJ) or days 11-15 (C57BL/6) of infection. Mice were euthanized on day 42 and oviduct histopathology was compared to mice receiving doxycycline or PBS alone.

**Evaluation of oviduct immune cells by flow cytometry.** Cell surface proteins were stained with PerCP-Cy5.5 anti-mouse CD45 (Clone 30-F11), V450 anti-mouse CD3 (Clone 500A2), PE-Cy7 anti-mouse CD8 (Clone 53-6.7), and FITC anti-mouse CD11b (Clone M1/70),
all from BD Biosciences, and APC anti-mouse CD4 (Clone RM4-5) and PE-anti-mouse Ly6G (Clone RB6-8C5) from eBioscience. Data were acquired using a LSRII Analyzer (BD Biosciences) and analyzed using FlowJo software (Tree Star, Ashland, OR). Fifty- to one-hundred thousand cells were collected for each data point. The absolute number of leukocytes/oviduct was determined by the following calculation: 

\[
\text{# cell marker specific cells/oviduct} = \left( \frac{\text{# of gated cells positive for the cell marker of interest as determined by flow cytometer}}{\text{# cells in the oviduct as determined by hemocytometer count}} \right) \times \left( \frac{\text{# of cells analyzed by the flow cytometer}}{100000} \right)
\]

**Evaluation of MMP-9 in oviduct homogenates.** An aliquot of each oviduct homogenate was analyzed for matrix metalloproteinase-9 (MMP-9) using an enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay from R&D Systems (Minneapolis, MN). Each sample was run in duplicate.

**Histopathology.** At the time of euthanasia, gross pathology, including presence of hydrosalpinx formation, was noted, and the entire genital tract was removed and fixed in 10% formalin. The specimens were then encased in a paraffin block and sectioned into 4-µm slices for placement on a slide. They were stained with hematoxylin and eosin and were evaluated by a pathologist blinded to the experimental design. Oviducts were individually scored for erosion and dilatation using a four-tiered, semi-quantitative scoring system as previously described\textsuperscript{33,38}. Briefly, for erosion, 0 is normal; 1, minimal presence of parameter; 2, scattered aggregates of parameter, 3, numerous aggregates; and 4 is confluence of parameter. For dilatation: 0 is normal; 1, minimal luminal dilatation with no loss of plicae; 2, dilatation twice the normal diameter with loss/flattening of some plicae; 3, dilatation with complete flattening of mucosa; 4, marked dilatation with rupture of the wall.
Statistics. Statistical comparisons between groups for lower genital tract bacterial burden were made by two-factor repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) with a Bonferroni posttest. Comparisons between groups for oviduct bacterial burden, flow cytometry data, and MMP-9 levels were made with one-way ANOVA. A Kruskal Wallis test was used to determine significant differences in pathology scores. Analysis of data was performed on GraphPad Prism, and P values of < 0.05 were considered significant.

RESULTS

Histopathology of oviducts harvested on day 21 of infection reveals preservation of the oviduct structure with steroid treatment. In our initial experiment (Fig. 1, experiment 1), mice (N=5 per group) receiving 0.05, 0.5, 1, or 2.5 mg/kg per day of dexamethasone or PBS were euthanized at day 21 of infection, and their oviducts were harvested for histopathology. Microscopic examination revealed relative preservation of the oviduct structure in mice receiving 1 mg/kg/day of dexamethasone (Fig. 2B) or 2.5 mg/kg/day of dexamethasone (Fig. 2C) compared to a control group receiving PBS (Fig. 2A) or mice who received 0.05 and 0.5 mg/kg (data not shown), which suggested a potential beneficial effect of steroid treatment and prompted further investigation.

Leukocyte numbers are reduced in the oviducts of infected mice receiving dexamethasone but MMP-9 is similar and bacterial burden is increased compared to controls. We hypothesized that treatment with dexamethasone would lead to a decrease in the influx of inflammatory cells into the oviduct and a subsequent reduction in chronic pathology.
Oviducts were harvested from steroid-treated C57BL/6 and C3H/HeOuJ mice on day 11 or 14 of infection, respectively (Fig. 1, experiments 2 and 3). These are days we have noted that neutrophil numbers peak in the oviducts of the respective mouse strains after *C. muridarum* infection. We detected a 6-fold reduction in the numbers of neutrophils (Fig. 3A) and a non-statistically significant reduction in the numbers of macrophages (Fig. 3B) in the oviducts of C3H/HeOuJ mice treated with 1 or 2.5 mg/kg of dexamethasone compared to infected controls. Steroid treatment also resulted in a decrease in the numbers of CD4+ (Fig. 3C) and CD8+ T cells (Fig. 3D) consistent with the dual effect of steroids to inhibit the proliferation of T cells as well as chemotaxis and adhesion of phagocytes. Similar results were observed in C57BL/6 mice (data not shown). Despite a reduction in neutrophil influx, steroid treatment had no effect on MMP-9 levels. Ramsey et al. demonstrated neutrophils were a major source of MMP-9 production; thus, persistently elevated MMP-9 levels suggest neutrophil release of proteases was not inhibited by steroid administration (Fig. 3E) or that uninhibited production of MMPs by oviduct stromal cells contributed to oviduct damage. Additionally, increased chlamydial 16S rRNA detected on day 14 in mice receiving dexamethasone suggest steroid treatment had a detrimental effect on host defense mechanisms (Fig. 3F). Although an overall dose-response effect was not observed with the higher dose of 2.5 mg/kg, there was one animal in this group with minimal response to steroids that skewed the results towards the control.

**Dexamethasone treatment failed to reduce chronic oviduct pathology and led to an increase in lower genital tract bacterial burden.** Lower genital tract bacterial burden was monitored through day 42 in groups of C57BL/6 and C3H/HeOuJ mice treated with dexamethasone on days 7-21 (Fig. 1, experiments 2 and 3). A divergence in chlamydial burden was observed beginning on day 10 of infection, with statistically-significant increases occurring...
on days 14-21 in C57BL/6 mice receiving 1 or 2.5 mg/kg/day of dexamethasone compared to controls (Fig. 4A). The fact that increased bacterial burden occurred during the time of steroid administration suggested again that steroids were acting to inhibit immune mechanisms important for control of infection. Histologic evaluation of oviducts harvested on day 42 revealed no decrease in mucosal epithelial erosion (Fig. 4B) or dilatation (Fig. 4C). Results in C3H/HeOuJ mice were similar (data not shown). Oviducts from mock-infected C57BL/6 and C3H/HeOuJ mice exhibited no erosion and minimal to no dilatation (median dilatation and erosion scores = 0 in both murine strains, maximum dilatation score = 1 in both strains, maximum erosion score = 0 in both strains). These findings prompted a trial of high-dose dexamethasone in combination with the antibiotic doxycycline in an effort to suppress inflammation while effectively eliminating the inflammatory bacterial trigger.

**Dexamethasone administration in conjunction with doxycycline does not reduce chronic oviduct disease.** In an adjunctive steroid treatment protocol (Fig. 1, experiment 4 and Table 1), C3H/HeOuJ mice were given higher doses of dexamethasone in an effort to further suppress oviduct inflammation. Groups of mice (N=5 per group) received a 14-day course of 2.5, 5, or 10 mg/kg/day of dexamethasone and 5 days of doxycycline therapy during a 7-day steroid taper. A control group received doxycycline alone for 5 days. Histopathologic evaluation of oviducts obtained at day 42 showed no improvement in oviduct dilatation scores in mice receiving dexamethasone as an adjunctive to doxycycline compared to those mice receiving doxycycline alone (Table 1, experiment 4). As observed in experiments 2 and 3 (Fig 4), an increase in lower genital tract bacterial burden was observed during the time of high-dose steroid treatment (Fig 1A, supplemental data).
These findings led to a further refinement of our experimental treatment protocol to a shortened, 3-day burst of dexamethasone on days 11-13 (C57BL/6) or 14-16 of infection (C3H/HeOuJ) in combination with doxycycline for 5 days (Fig. 1, experiments 5 and 6 and Table 1). Treatment days were chosen based on our prior determination of peak days of oviduct neutrophil influx in C57BL/6\textsuperscript{39} and C3H/HeOuJ mice\textsuperscript{9}. Although no increase in bacterial burden was observed during short-course steroid treatment and a rapid resolution of infection occurred with doxycycline therapy (Fig. 1B, supplemental data), no improvement in oviduct dilatation scores were observed on day 42 post infection (Table 1, experiments 5 and 6). All groups that received doxycycline alone exhibited lower dilatation scores compared to control groups given PBS and those given dexamethasone together with doxycycline, but these differences were not statistically significant (Table 1).

DISCUSSION

An overly robust host inflammatory response to \textit{Chlamydia} causes damage to the delicate structures of the oviduct\textsuperscript{5,42}. Steroids given alone or as an adjunct to antibiotics are potent anti-inflammatory agents that have been shown to reduce pathology and improve outcomes in a variety of inflammatory disorders\textsuperscript{21,26,27,29,31,43}. Therefore, we sought to determine whether the administration of steroids to mice with chlamydial genital tract infection would decrease oviduct inflammation and reduce chronic oviduct pathology.

We determined that although dexamethasone administered in doses of 1 and 2.5 mg/kg per day led to a statistically significant decrease in the number of neutrophils infiltrating the oviducts during a time of peak inflammation, subsequent pathologic evaluation of tissues from mice treated similarly revealed no reduction in chronic oviduct damage compared to controls.
Additionally, while early necrosis and cellular infiltrates are reduced in the oviducts of mice given dexamethasone, it appears that there is a minimum threshold of damaging inflammation that is surpassed despite treatment with steroids, such that no improvement in chronic pathology is observed. The detection of equivalent levels of tissue-damaging MMP-9 in the oviducts of mice treated with these doses indicated the anti-inflammatory effects on neutrophils were insufficient to be protective or that MMP-9 production continued in alternative cell types such as the oviduct stromal cells. These same doses led to decreased infiltration of protective CD4^+ T cells and an increase in oviduct and lower genital tract bacterial burden. Although PMNs appear to be most important in driving tissue damage, they also contribute to bacterial killing and inhibition of neutrophil influx may also contribute to enhanced bacterial burden in steroid-treated mice. Higher doses of dexamethasone given for three weeks combined with doxycycline during a 7-day steroid taper also failed to improve chronic oviduct pathology. Both two- and three-week courses of dexamethasone led to increased lower genital tract bacterial burden indicating prolonged steroid treatment had a derogatory effect on host defense mechanisms although we cannot rule out a direct effect of dexamethasone on epithelial host cells leading to enhanced bacterial growth. Unfortunately, the provision of a short-course of dexamethasone combined with doxycycline treatment also failed to improve outcomes.

While Maichuk was able to demonstrate improved therapeutic efficacy in patients treated for paratrachoma with antibiotics plus steroids compared to antibiotics alone\textsuperscript{44}, our data are more consistent with the negative findings of Patton, et al., who demonstrated that when steroids were added to doxycycline treatment in female macaques whose Fallopian tubes were directly inoculated with \textit{C. trachomatis}, the addition of steroids led to no improvement in oviduct pathology and persistent oviduct infection\textsuperscript{45}. Prior studies revealed that steroid treatment led to
increased *C. trachomatis* lung burden after intranasal inoculation of mice\textsuperscript{46}, and failed to prevent infertility in mice inoculated directly into their ovarian bursa with *C. muridarum*\textsuperscript{47}.

Huang and colleagues demonstrated antibiotics and adjunctive steroids led to a reduction in both the occurrence and severity of renal scarring in pediatric patients with pyelonephritis\textsuperscript{26}. We were unable to replicate these findings in the murine model of chlamydial pelvic inflammatory disease. The tubal anatomy of the oviduct may enhance risk for permanent damage from inflammation as scarring at any site along the tube will lead to proximal or distal obstruction and damage to contiguous sites while the kidney contains multiple, adjacent renal pyramids that may compensate for the loss of others.

Extrapolation of our findings to women is limited greatly by the relative virulence of *C. muridarum* in mice compared to *C. trachomatis* infection in woman. *Chlamydia muridarum* universally ascends to the oviducts of mice, and the majority of infected mice of multiple inbred strains exhibit high rates of hydrosalpinx and infertility\textsuperscript{4,33}. A minority of women infected with *C. trachomatis* develops complications\textsuperscript{48,49}, but it is this high-risk group who would most benefit from a drug with anti-inflammatory effects. Our murine data suggest that the T cell inhibitory effects of steroids can be detrimental during chlamydial infection, and drugs with more discriminating anti-inflammatory activities are needed. Improved understanding of specific immune mechanisms responsible for oviduct scarring should allow for development and testing of agents that inhibit these processes selectively. In the interim, creating an effective anti-chlamydial vaccine remains of paramount importance to avoid the long-term sequelae of *Chlamydia* pelvic inflammatory disease.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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REFERENCES


**FIGURE LEGENDS**

FIG 1: Treatment diagram for six independent experiments using dexamethasone with or without the addition of doxycycline. Experiment 1, 3, 4, and 5 included 5 C3H/HeOuJ mice per group. Experiment 2 included 5 C57BL/6 mice per group. Experiment 6 included 15 C57BL/6 mice per group.
FIG 2: Oviduct histology with and without dexamethasone treatment. Representative images of hematoxylin-and-eosin stained sections of oviducts on day 21 of infection from C3H/HeOuJ mice that received either phosphate buffered saline (A), 1 mg/kg/day of dexamethasone (B), or 2.5 mg/kg/day of dexamethasone (C) via IP injection on days 7 to 21. Open arrow represents area of central necrosis within the oviduct (A). Solid arrows indicate leukocyte infiltrates (A-C). Magnification for all images is 40X.

FIG 3: Inflammatory cell influx, MMP-9, and bacterial burden in oviducts of infected C3H/HeOuJ mice with and without steroid treatment. Absolute number of neutrophils (A), macrophages (B), CD4⁺ (C), and CD8⁺ T cells (D) detected by flow cytometry. (E) Levels of MMP-9 detected by ELISA, and (F) chlamydial load as measured by 16s rRNA-amplified PCR product. In all panels (A-F), oviducts were obtained at day 14 of infection from mice receiving either 1 or 2.5 mg/kg/day of IP dexamethasone or PBS (days 7-14). Symbols in panels A-D represent absolute number of cells for individual mice while the horizontal bars represent median values. In panels E-F, each bar represents mean ± SD of 10 oviducts processed from 5 mice per group. *, P<0.05 by the Kruskal-Wallis Test and Dunn’s posttest analysis. Similar results were obtained in C57BL/6 mice that received the same treatment protocol.

FIG 4: Lower genital tract bacterial burden and chronic pathology with and without steroid treatment. (A) IFUs cultured from cervical swabs in C57BL/6 mice. The data are means ± SD with 5 animals per group. A comparison of IFU data during dexamethasone administration by
two-way RM ANOVA on days 7-21 revealed $P=0.01$ for PBS versus 1.0 mg/kg dexamethasone and $P=0.03$ for PBS versus 2.5 mg/kg dexamethasone. Oviduct erosion (B) and dilatation (C) scores determined by histologic examination of tissues harvested 42 days post infection. Horizontal bars represent median scores. The Kruskal-Wallis test revealed no significant difference between the groups. In all panels, the data presented were obtained from a single experiment using C57BL/6 mice with 5 mice per group. Similar results were obtained in C3H/HeOuJ mice using the same treatment protocol.
**Figure A**

Log₁₀ Inclusions/mL vs. Days Post Infection

- Control
- 1 mg/kg Dex
- 2.5 mg/kg Dex

**Figure B**

Pathology Score vs. Days Post Infection

- Erosion
- Dilatation

**Figure C**

Pathology Score vs. Days Post Infection

- Control
- 1 mg/kg Dex
- 2.5 mg/kg Dex
Table 1. Doxycycline + adjunctive steroid treatment protocols and disease outcome.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Experiment</th>
<th>Treatment Protocola</th>
<th>Disease Outcome</th>
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<tr>
<td>Exp. 4; N=5 C3H/HeOuJ per group</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dexamethasone (mg/kg)</td>
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<td>Exp. 5; N=5 C3H/HeOuJ per group</td>
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<td>2.5 (D14-D16)</td>
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<td>Exp. 6; N=15 C57BL/6 per group</td>
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<td>2.5 (D11-13)</td>
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aControl mice received PBS in place of indicated steroid or antibiotic treatments.
bMice treated with dexamethasone in Exp. 4 received a 7 day steroid taper.
cOviducts were harvested on days 33 to 42 of infection and pathology scores within each experiment were compared by Kruskal-Wallis test; none were significantly different.