

Index

i.	Tables index	v
ii.	Figures index	vi
iii.	Annexes index	viii
iv.	List of abbreviations	ix
1.	Introduction	1
1.1.	Neuroblastoma	1
1.1.1.	Epidemiology and clinical presentation	1
1.1.2.	Staging and risk classification	3
1.1.3.	Risk-stratified treatments	7
1.1.3.1.	Low-risk treatment	8
1.1.3.2.	Intermediate-risk treatment	9
1.1.3.3.	High-risk treatment	9
1.1.3.4.	Relapsed or refractory treatment	13
1.1.4.	Pathogenesis and molecular alterations	15
1.1.4.1.	Germline mutations	15
1.1.4.2.	Recurrent somatic alterations and actionable targets	16
1.1.4.2.1.	MYCN amplification and MYC overexpression	16
1.1.4.2.2.	ALK amplification and mutations	19
1.1.4.2.3.	Activation of telomere maintenance mechanisms	20
1.1.4.2.4.	LIN28B polymorphisms	20
1.1.4.2.5.	Segmental chromosomal aberrations	21
1.1.4.2.6.	Epigenetic modifications	21
1.1.4.2.7.	MicroRNAs	22
1.1.4.2.8.	Neurotrophin receptors	23
1.1.4.3.	Evolution of genetic alterations in neuroblastoma from diagnosis to relapse	24
1.1.5.	Neuroblastoma cell of origin: the genesis point	25
1.1.6.	Neuroblastoma cell plasticity: regulatory switch in pathogenesis	28
1.1.6.1.	Transitioning between adrenergic and mesenchymal cell states	28
1.1.6.2.	Neuroblastoma plasticity as a driver of resistance	29
1.1.7.	Immune defense and escape in neuroblastoma	31
1.1.7.1.	Immune recognition of tumor cells	31
1.1.7.2.	Immune evasion strategies in neuroblastoma	33

1.1.7.2.1.	Immunogenicity	33
1.1.7.2.2.	Immune checkpoint molecules	34
1.1.7.2.3.	Immunosuppressive myeloid and stromal cells	34
1.1.7.2.4.	Soluble mediators of immune suppression	35
1.1.7.3.	Implications for immunotherapy	36
1.1.8.	Emerging immunotherapies in neuroblastoma	38
1.1.8.1.	Antibody-based immunotherapies	38
1.1.8.2.	Adoptive cellular therapies	40
1.1.8.2.1.	T-cell therapy	40
1.1.8.2.2.	NK-cell therapy	41
1.1.8.2.3.	Vaccines	42
2.	Hypothesis and objectives	44
2.	Materials and methods	45
2.1.	Patients	45
2.2.	Cell culture and culture conditions	46
2.2.1.	Neuroblastoma cell lines	46
2.2.2.	Neuroblastoma primary cell lines	46
2.2.3.	Neuroblastoma cell lines for CAR-t assay	47
2.2.4.	Neuroblastoma patient-derived organoids	47
2.2.5.	Monocytes cell line and primary human monocytes	48
2.3.	Monocyte differentiation and macrophage polarization	48
2.4.	Co-culture system	49
2.5.	CAR-T killing assay	49
2.6.	Cytokine secretion analysis	50
2.7.	Single nucleotide polymorphism arrays	50
2.8.	Cell viability assays	50
2.9.	Gene expression analyses	51
2.9.1.	RNA isolation and cDNA synthesis	51
2.9.2.	Quantitative PCR	52
2.9.3.	Droplet digital PCR	52
2.9.4.	Flow cytometry	54
2.10.	Tumor-infiltrating immune cells analysis	54
2.10.1.	High-risk neuroblastoma datasets	54

2.10.2.	Deconvolution of immune cell subsets	55
2.11.	Methylome profiling	56
2.11.1.	Liquid biopsy sampling and data processing	56
2.11.2.	Annotation of CpG islands	56
2.12.	miRNA analysis	57
2.13.	Transcriptomic and epigenomic datasets	58
2.14.	Statistical analyses	59
3.	Results	61
3.1.	Half of high-risk neuroblastoma patients with 11q deletion relapse after anti-GD2 immunotherapy	61
3.2.	Immunosuppressive tumor microenvironment in 11q-deleted high-risk neuroblastomas	65
3.2.1.	Increased immune infiltrating cells in 11q-deleted high-risk neuroblastomas	65
3.2.2.	Immunosuppressive molecules in 11q-deleted high-risk neuroblastomas	68
3.3.	Intrinsic DNA repair defects in 11q-deleted high-risk neuroblastomas	69
3.4.	Regulatory Interactions of 11q-Deleted miRNAs	72
3.5.	Neuroblastoma cells induce macrophage polarization towards the M2 phenotype	75
3.6.	M2 macrophages increase neuroblastoma cell proliferation	80
3.7.	M2 macrophages induce neuroblastoma stemness and mesenchymal phenotype	82
3.8.	Tumor-associated macrophages and their impact on PHOX2B pc-CAR T-cell efficacy in neuroblastoma	85
3.8.1.	Enhanced PHOX2B PC-CAR T-cell tumor cell killing by M1 macrophages	85
3.8.2.	MHC I suppression by M2 macrophages hinder PHOX2B PC CAR-T cell-mediated killing in neuroblastoma cells	92
3.9.	Methylome profiling of liquid biopsies from high-risk neuroblastomas	96
3.9.1.	Differential epigenetic signatures distinguish high-risk neuroblastomas with 11q deletion and MYCN amplification	96
3.9.2.	Reduced expression of 11q double-strand break repair genes is independent of their promoter methylation	105
4.	Discussion	106
4.1.	Impact and limitations of anti-GD2 immunotherapy in 11q-deleted high-risk neuroblastoma: insights from the HR-NBL1/SIOPEN trial	106
4.2.	Exploring and targeting the tumor immune microenvironment of 11q-deleted high-risk neuroblastomas	108
4.3.	Genetic instability of 11q-deleted high-risk neuroblastomas	113
4.4.	Regulatory landscape of 11q-deleted miRNAs in neuroblastoma	114

4.5.	Collaboration between M2 macrophages and neuroblastoma cells promotes a tumor-favorable environment	116
4.6.	Macrophage-induced mesenchymal phenotype: a link to 11q deletion	119
4.7.	Macrophage polarization: a double-edged sword in CAR-T cell therapy for neuroblastoma	121
4.8.	Epigenetic alterations impacting the tumor microenvironment and immune response in 11q-deleted high-risk neuroblastomas	123
5.	Conclusions	127
6.	References	128
7.	Annexes	144