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Interferon- γ : Promising therapeutic target in atherosclerosis

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Abstract

Atherosclerosis is a chronic inflammatory disorder of the vasculature and is the primary cause of cardiovascular disease (CVD). CVD is currently the world's leading cause of death and the numbers are predicted to rise further because of a global increase in risk factors such as diabetes and obesity. Current therapies such as statins have had a major impact in reducing mortality from CVD. However, there is a marked residual CVD risk in patients on statin therapy. It is therefore important to understand the molecular basis of this disease in detail and to develop alternative novel therapeutics. Interferon- γ (IFN- γ) is a pro-inflammatory cytokine that is often regarded as a master regulator of atherosclerosis development. IFN- γ is able to influence several key steps during atherosclerosis development, including pro-inflammatory gene expression, the recruitment of monocytes from the blood to the activated arterial endothelium and plaque stability. This central role of IFN- γ makes it a promising therapeutic target. The purpose of this editorial is to describe the key role IFN- γ plays during atherosclerosis development, as well as discuss potential strategies to target it therapeutically.

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