Commentary

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Cellular Signaling Pathways Involved in Inflammatory Response Regulation

Fernanda Almeida*

Institute of Functional Genomics, State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), SP 13083-970, Brazil

***Corresponding author:** Fernanda Almeida, Institute of Functional Genomics, State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), SP 13083-970, Brazil; E-mail: almeidafernanda01@unicamp.br

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Introduction

Inflammation is a fundamental biological process that protects the body against pathogens, tissue injury, and harmful stimuli. While acute inflammation is essential for initiating immune defense and promoting healing, dysregulated or chronic inflammation contributes to the development of various diseases, including autoimmune disorders, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and metabolic syndromes. Cellular signaling pathways regulate the intensity, duration, and resolution of the inflammatory response, ensuring that protective mechanisms do not cause collateral tissue damage. These pathways integrate signals from cytokines, chemokines, microbial components, and environmental stressors, activating gene expression programs that coordinate immune cell recruitment, cytokine production, and tissue repair. Understanding the molecular mechanisms behind inflammatory signaling provides critical insights into disease pathogenesis and supports the development of targeted anti-inflammatory therapies [1].

Description

Several key signaling pathways orchestrate the initiation and amplification of the inflammatory response. Among these, the NF-κB (nuclear factor kappa-light-chain-enhancer of activated B cells) pathway is one of the most central regulators. NF-κB is activated by diverse stimuli, including pathogen-associated molecular patterns (PAMPs), proinflammatory cytokines like TNF-α and IL-1β, and cellular stress. Activation of NF-κB leads to the transcription of numerous genes involved in inflammation, such as cytokines, adhesion molecules, and anti-apoptotic proteins. The pathway is tightly controlled by inhibitory proteins (IκBs), which sequester NF-κB in the cytoplasm. Once activated, NF-κB translocates to the nucleus to initiate transcription, amplifying the inflammatory cascade. Dysregulation of NF-κB signaling is associated with chronic inflammatory diseases, making it a prime target for pharmacological intervention [2].

Another major signaling pathway involved in inflammation is the MAPK (mitogen-activated protein kinase) pathway, which includes ERK, JNK, and p38 MAPKs. These kinases are activated in response to stress signals, cytokines, and microbial components, triggering transcription factors such as AP-1 that regulate genes related to inflammation, cell survival, and differentiation. The MAPK pathway plays a critical role in controlling cytokine production, immune cell activation, and tissue remodeling during inflammation. p38 MAPK, in particular, is highly responsive to inflammatory stimuli and regulates the synthesis of key cytokines like IL-6 and TNF-α [3].

The JAK/STAT (Janus kinase/signal transducer and activator of transcription) pathway also plays an essential role in regulating inflammatory responses. This pathway is activated by various cytokines, including interferons, interleukins, and growth factors. Upon cytokine binding, JAKs phosphorylate STAT proteins, which then dimerize and enter the nucleus to regulate gene expression. STAT3 and STAT1 are particularly important in inflammation, influencing immune cell differentiation, cytokine production, and antiviral responses [4,5].

Conclusion

In conclusion, cellular signaling pathways such as NF-κB, MAPK, and JAK/STAT are central to the regulation of inflammatory responses. They coordinate the activation, amplification, and resolution of inflammation by controlling gene expression and immune cell behavior. Dysregulation of these pathways contributes to chronic inflammatory diseases, highlighting their importance as therapeutic targets. Advances in understanding these molecular mechanisms continue to drive the development of targeted therapies aimed at restoring immune balance and preventing inflammation-related pathologies. As research progresses, a deeper understanding of these interconnected pathways will further enhance strategies for managing inflammation and improving human health.

Acknowledgement

None

Conflict of Interest

None

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