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Prostaglandins and chronic inflammation

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1 **Abstract**

2 Chronic inflammation is the basis of various chronic illnesses including cancer and
3 vascular diseases. However, much has yet to be learned how inflammation becomes
4 chronic. Although prostaglandins (PGs) are well established as mediators of acute
5 inflammation, recent studies in experimental animals have provided evidence that they
6 also function in transition to and maintenance of chronic inflammation. One role PGs
7 play in such processes is amplification of cytokine signaling. As such, PGs can facilitate
8 acquired immunity and induce long-lasting immune inflammation. PGs also contribute
9 to chronic inflammation by making a positive feedback loop and/or by inducing
10 chemokines and recruiting inflammatory cells to alternate active cell populations at
11 affected sites. PGs also contribute to tissue remodeling as seen in angiogenesis and
12 fibrosis. Although such roles of PGs should be verified in human diseases, these
13 findings suggest that PG signaling is a promising therapeutic target of chronic
14 inflammatory diseases.

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1 **Involvement of PGs in transition from acute inflammation to chronic**
2 **inflammation?**

3 Inflammation is triggered by various kinds of tissue insults, induces local reddening,
4 heat, swelling, pain and fever, and mostly subsides in a few days. However,
5 inflammation often persists and becomes chronic. Growing evidence now suggests
6 involvement of chronic inflammatory processes in pathogenesis of a variety of diseases
7 including cancer [1], metabolic syndrome [2] and vascular diseases [3]. In these
8 disorders, abundant infiltration of inflammatory cells and expression of various
9 pro-inflammatory molecules are found in affected tissues. Given that chronic diseases
10 have a great impact on social health due to a large number of affected patients and a
11 significant therapeutic cost, understanding mechanisms of transition to and maintenance
12 of chronic inflammation is important. Potential mechanisms contributing to chronic
13 inflammation include i) conversion of acute inflammation to long-lasting immune
14 inflammation, ii) activation of a positive feedback loop by repetitive stimuli, iii)
15 sustenance of inflammation by changing active cell populations in affected tissues, and
16 finally iv) tissue remodeling.

17 Prostaglandins (PGs) including PGD_2 , PGE_2 , $\text{PGF}_{2\alpha}$, PGI_2 and thromboxane (TX)
18 A_2 are a group of lipid mediators produced and released in response to various stimuli.

1 They are synthesized from arachidonic acid by sequential actions of cyclooxygenase
2 (COX) and respective synthases, and exert their actions through a family of G
3 protein-coupled receptors (GPCRs), prostaglandin D receptor (DP), EP1, EP2, EP3 and
4 EP4 subtypes of prostaglandin E receptor, prostaglandin F receptor (FP), prostaglandin I
5 receptor (IP) and thromboxane A receptor (TP), and one GPCR in a different family,
6 CRTH2/DP2 [4]. Because COX is the target of aspirin-like non-steroidal
7 anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) that effectively suppress various symptoms of acute
8 inflammation, many symptoms of acute inflammation were presumed to be mediated by
9 PGs. Indeed, recent studies using knockout mice deficient in each PG receptor and PG
10 receptor type/subtype-specific agonists and antagonists have identified receptors and
11 mechanisms responsible for PG-mediated inflammatory swelling, fever generation and
12 hyperalgesia [4-6]. More intriguingly, these studies also suggest that PG signaling is
13 involved in transition to and maintenance of chronic inflammation. Here we review
14 experimental evidences to support such a hypothesis and discuss their therapeutic
15 implications.

16

17 **PGs as a cytokine amplifier**

18 Because COX-2 can be induced by lipopolysaccharide (LPS) and pro-inflammatory

1 cytokines such as interleukin (IL)-1 β and IL-6, and COX-1 is constitutively expressed
2 irrespectively of these stimuli, PGs are believed to be formed either independently or
3 downstream of cytokines and innate immunity and elicit inflammatory symptoms.
4 However, recent studies have revealed that PGs often work with cytokines and
5 pathogen- or damage-associated molecular patterns (PAMPs and DAMPs) in various
6 inflammatory settings and amplify cytokine- and PAMP/DAMP-signaling by enhancing
7 expression of inflammation-related genes induced by these stimuli. For example, Honda
8 *et al.* [7] reported interaction of PGI₂-IP signaling and IL-1 β in collagen-induced
9 arthritis (CIA) in mice, a model of human rheumatoid arthritis. In this model, IP
10 deficiency did not affect the incidence of arthritis but significantly reduced the extent of
11 arthritis determined by inflammatory cell infiltration, synovial cell proliferation and
12 bone destruction. Cytokine analysis revealed a marked reduction in the content of IL-6
13 in arthritic paws of IP-deficient mice without affecting production of anti-collagen
14 antibody. Treatment of cultured synovial fibroblasts with indomethacin *in vitro*
15 significantly reduced the amount of IL-6 induced by IL-1 β , and this reduction was
16 rescued by the addition of an exogenous IP agonist. Furthermore, microarray analysis
17 revealed that approximately one-third of 400 genes induced by IL-1 β in cultured
18 synoviocytes were suppressed by the PG synthesis inhibitor indomethacin, and

1 expression of one hundred genes among them was restored by treatment with an IP
2 agonist. The genes whose expression is amplified by IP signaling include; those
3 involved in inflammation such as IL-6, IL-11, and CXCL7; those involved in cell
4 proliferation such as various isoforms of fibroblast growth factor (FGF), vascular
5 endothelial growth factor (VEGF) and hypoxia inducible factor 1 alpha (HIF1 α); and
6 those involved in tissue remodeling such as receptor activator of nuclear factor kappa-B
7 ligand (RANKL) and members of the a disintegrin and metalloproteinase with
8 thrombospondin motifs (ADAMTS) family. It should be mentioned that PGI₂ alone did
9 not induce expression of these genes. Intriguingly, an approximately three-fold increase
10 in expression of IL-1 receptor (IL1R1) was observed with the IP agonist treatment,
11 suggesting that this may be the basis of IP-mediated amplification of IL-1 β signaling.
12 Importance of PGI₂ in development of arthritis was confirmed in another mouse model,
13 autoantibody-driven K/BxN serum transfer arthritis [8]. Interestingly, PGI₂ in this model
14 almost solely derived from COX-1-catalyzed reaction. An example of PG-mediated
15 amplification of PAMP/DAMP-signaling was reported by Oshima *et al.* [9], who
16 examined interaction of PGE₂-EP4 signaling and LPS. They stimulated the RAW264.7
17 macrophage cell line with LPS, and examined the effects of a COX-2 inhibitor,
18 celecoxib, and an EP4 antagonist, RQ-00015986/CJ-42794, on LPS-induced gene

1 expression. They found that celecoxib or RQ-00015986 significantly suppressed gene
2 expression of COX-2, IL-1 β and IL-6. These results support a role of PGE₂-EP4
3 signaling as an ‘amplifier’ of LPS signaling. Interestingly, the above treatment did not
4 affect induction of microsomal prostaglandin E synthase-1 (mPGES-1) and tumor
5 necrosis factor alpha (TNF- α) by LPS, suggesting selective modulation of gene
6 expression. As described below in more detail, the role of PGs as a ‘cytokine amplifier’
7 was also demonstrated in induction of specific T helper subsets involved in immune
8 inflammation [10]. These findings suggest that, in addition to their actions in acute
9 inflammation, PGs are able to convert short-lived inflammatory responses to long-term
10 gene-expression-dependent processes by facilitating actions of cytokines and/or innate
11 immunity. Recognition of PGs as a ‘cytokine amplifier’ is conceptually important to
12 understand their roles in chronic inflammation (Figure 1).

13

14 **PGs in acquired immunity and immune inflammation**

15 Acquired immunity is initiated by processing and presentation to naïve T cells of
16 antigen by dendritic cells (DCs), which are then differentiated to specific T cell subsets.
17 The type of immune response is dependent on which T cell subset is induced to
18 particular antigen. Two distinct subsets of helper T cells, Th1 and Th17, which are

1 characterized by production of interferon- γ (IFN- γ) and IL-17, respectively [11], are
2 important cell populations that contribute to pathogenesis of various chronic
3 autoimmune inflammatory diseases. Indeed, in human chronic inflammatory diseases
4 such as multiple sclerosis and Crohn's disease, elevation of IFN- γ and IL-17 and
5 accumulation of these T cell subsets in affected organs (the brain of patients with
6 multiple sclerosis and the gut of patients with Crohn's disease) are reported [12-15].
7 Th1 differentiation is induced by IL-12 and facilitated by IFN- γ . Th17 differentiation
8 and expansion are induced by TGF- β /IL-6 and IL-23, respectively. Disruption of genes
9 for these cytokines or their pharmacological inhibition suppressed disease development
10 or progression in mouse models of the above diseases such as experimental autoimmune
11 encephalomyelitis (EAE) and experimental colitis [16-18].

12 PGs have been traditionally regarded as immuno-suppressants. Indeed,
13 PGE₂/cAMP-mediated suppression of differentiation of Th1 cells has been repeatedly
14 demonstrated *in vitro* [19, 20]. However, recent studies have revealed that, in contrast to
15 traditional belief, PGs are involved in differentiation and expansion of Th1 and Th17
16 cells (Figure 1). Yao *et al.* [10] revisited the action of PGE₂ on Th1 differentiation. One
17 plausible mechanism of inhibitory action of PGE₂ and cAMP on T cell activation is
18 lymphocyte-specific protein tyrosine kinase (LCK) phosphorylation by C-terminal Src

1 kinase, and this is antagonized by T cell receptor (TCR) stimulation. Yao and colleagues
2 added increasing amounts of anti-CD28 to enhance TCR signaling and then examined
3 effects of PGE₂ on T cell differentiation under the Th1 skewing conditions. Intriguingly,
4 under these conditions, PGE₂ enhanced IL-12-mediated Th1 differentiation in a
5 concentration-dependent manner from 1 nM. This action was mimicked by an EP2 or
6 EP4 selective agonist and abolished in T cells deficient in EP2 and EP4, suggesting that
7 with strengthened TCR stimulation, PGE₂-EP2/EP4 signaling enhances rather than
8 suppresses differentiation of T cells to the Th1 subset. They further extended their study
9 and found that PGE₂-EP2/4 signaling facilitates Th17 expansion induced by IL-23 via
10 cAMP [10]. Chen *et al.* [21] used a selective EP4 antagonist, ER-819762, and also
11 found these actions of PGE₂-EP4 signaling on Th1 differentiation and Th17 expansion.
12 Facilitation of IL-23-induced Th17 expansion by PGE₂-EP2/4 signaling was also found
13 in human memory T cells, in which the PGE₂-cAMP pathway up-regulates expression
14 of receptors for IL-23 and IL-1 and synergizes with these cytokines to drive ROR γ τ ,
15 IL-17, IL-17F, CCL20 and CCR6 expression [22-24]. Thus, PGE₂ functions as a
16 cytokine amplifier also in this case (Figure 1). Another site of expansion of Th17 cells
17 by PGE₂ is IL-23 production by DCs. Yao *et al.* [10] demonstrated that IL-23
18 production from DCs stimulated with anti-CD40 antibody is enhanced by either PGE₂

1 or an EP4 agonist, and surprisingly, the addition of an EP4 antagonist or indomethacin
2 to this system almost totally suppressed IL-23 production, suggesting that endogenous
3 PGE₂ acts on EP4 and enhances IL-23 production from anti-CD40-stimulated DCs.
4 Inhibitory action of EP4 antagonism on IL-23 production by DCs was also found by
5 Chen *et al.* [21]. Furthermore, it was also shown that PGE₂ in combination with
6 Toll-like receptor ligands enhances the production of IL-23 p19 by DCs [25, 26]. In
7 addition to these EP2/EP4-mediated immuno-stimulatory actions of PGE₂, Nakajima *et*
8 *al.* [27] found that PGI₂-IP signaling also facilitates Th1 differentiation. Interestingly,
9 they also reported that this signaling suppresses Th2 differentiation from naïve T cells
10 from BALB/c mice under the Th2 skewing conditions (CD3/CD28 plus IL-4
11 stimulation) [27]. Perhaps consistent with these findings, Takahashi *et al.* [28] found
12 that loss of IP resulted in elevated IgE level and augmentation of allergic inflammation
13 in mice with OVA-induced allergic asthma.

14 Consistent with its immune-stimulatory effects *in vitro*, PGE₂-EP2/EP4 signaling
15 appears to participate in antigen-specific Th1 and Th17 cell differentiation/expansion *in*
16 *vivo* and is involved in disease progression of several immune inflammation models.
17 Yao *et al.* [10] examined the role of PGE₂-EP4 signaling in mouse contact
18 hypersensitivity (CHS) and EAE. In these models, Th1 and Th17 cells are thought to be

1 involved in both induction and exacerbation of diseases. Results showed that treatment
2 with an EP4 antagonist ameliorated both CHS and EAE [10]. Moreover, when
3 researchers examined lymph node cells from the immunized mice, proliferation and
4 production of IFN- γ and IL-17 in response to cognate antigen stimulation were
5 significantly reduced in mice treated with the EP4 antagonist [10]. EP2 and EP4 appear
6 to function redundantly in elicitation of EAE, because the EP4 antagonist suppresses T
7 cell activation and disease progression more potently when administered to
8 EP2-deficient mice than to wild-type mice [10]. Consistent with the
9 immuno-stimulatory action of EP4, Chen *et al.* [21] examined effects of ER-819762 on
10 CIA, and found that administration of this antagonist ameliorated progression of
11 arthritis with concomitant suppression of Th1 and Th17 production by lymph node cells.
12 These results suggest that PGE₂-EP4 signaling functions in immunization processes,
13 and blocking this signaling leads to suppression of Th1 differentiation and Th17
14 expansion. Sheibanie *et al.* [29] used 2,4,6-trinitrobenzene sulfonic acid
15 (TNBS)-induced colitis, an animal model of Crohn's disease, and found that
16 intraperitoneal (i.p.) administration of PGE₂ or misoprostol, an EP3/EP4 agonist,
17 exacerbated colitis and concomitantly increased expression of IL-23 p19, IL-17, IL-1 β ,
18 TNF- α and IL-6 in the colon. They also reported that misoprostol administration

1 exacerbated CIA in mice, and increased expression of IL-23 p19 and IL-17 at the joint
2 [30]. Taken together, these results suggest that PGE₂-EP2/EP4 signaling facilitates Th1
3 differentiation and Th17 expansion *in vivo* in various models of immune diseases.
4 Consistent with this, recent genome-wide analysis identified PTGER4 (EP4) as a locus
5 associated with Crohn's disease [31] and multiple sclerosis [32]. In the former, risk
6 SNPs in this locus are associated with increased EP4 expression [31].

7

8 **PGE₂ in a positive feedback loop for inflammation**

9 One possible mechanism for sustaining inflammation is a positive feedback loop to
10 amplify the initial signal. Indeed, the presence of such a positive feedback loop
11 involving PGs and its contribution to pathogenesis have been shown in animal models
12 of chronic inflammatory diseases such as intracranial aneurysm (IA) and cancer. IA is a
13 regional bulging of intracranial arteries (mostly at their bifurcation) and is histologically
14 characterized by arterial wall degeneration, inflammatory cell infiltration and NF- κ B
15 activation. IA is found in 1 to 5 % of the general population [33] and is a major cause of
16 subarachnoid hemorrhage [34]. Because most IAs occur at bifurcation where high
17 hemodynamic stress occurs, hemodynamic stress is believed to trigger IA formation.
18 However, how hemodynamic stress leads to chronic inflammation remained unclear.

1 Aoki *et al.* [35] used an animal model of IA, and demonstrated that the chronic
2 inflammatory response is induced by a positive feedback loop consisting of
3 COX-2-PGE₂-EP2-NF-κB. They found induction of COX-2 expression in endothelial
4 cells at the prospective site of aneurysm formation *in vivo*, which was mimicked *in vitro*
5 in cultured endothelial cells subjected to shear stress. Celecoxib treatment suppressed
6 IA formation, suggesting the importance of COX-2 in the pathogenesis of IA. They
7 further found that EP2 is upregulated at the site of IA, and mice deficient in EP2 are
8 selectively protected from IA. Furthermore, COX-2 inhibition suppressed EP2
9 expression and EP2 deficiency suppressed COX-2 induction in IA walls. These two
10 treatments both suppressed NF-κB activation, and NF-κB inhibition by decoy
11 oligonucleotides suppressed COX-2 expression in the IA model. Because activated
12 NF-κB induces various inflammation-associated genes, including MCP-1 (CCL2),
13 COX-2 inhibition and EP2 deficiency both reduced MCP-1 expression and suppressed
14 macrophage infiltration. Thus, hemodynamic stress triggers COX-2 induction, and
15 COX-2, PGE₂, EP2 and NF-κB make a positive feedback loop to amplify inflammatory
16 signals (Figure 2).

17 Inflammation promotes tumorigenesis and is very often associated with cancer.
18 One of the hallmarks of tumor-associated inflammation is expression of COX-2, though

1 COX-1 can also contribute to tumourigenesis [36]. Pharmacological inhibition and
2 genetic deletion of COX isoforms prevent precancerous adenomas in humans and
3 experimental animals and reduces colorectal cancer incidence in humans [37-39]. To
4 identify the responsible PG receptor for COX-mediated tumourigenesis, Sonoshita *et al.*
5 [40] made compound mutant mice of mice deficient in EP1, EP2 or EP3 and APC^{Δ716}
6 mice, a model of human familial adenomatous polyposis. They found that loss of EP2
7 selectively decreases the number and size of intestinal polyps in APC^{Δ716} mice. They
8 also demonstrated that EP2 is strongly induced and expressed in the same stromal
9 region of polyps as COX-2, and that loss of EP2 almost completely suppresses COX-2
10 induction in polyp tissues, suggesting a positive feedback loop between PGE₂, EP2 and
11 COX-2, as in IA. Furthermore, deletion of either COX-2 or EP2 suppresses induction of
12 VEGF, angiopoetin-2 and laminin-α2 in polyps. These results suggest that the
13 COX-2-PGE₂-EP2 loop functions in amplification of tumourigenesis-associated genes.
14 Although the Sonoshita's study did not identify involvement of NF-κB in the positive
15 feedback loop, its involvement was indicated recently in a separate study by Shin *et al.*
16 [41]. They examined effects of nicotine on proliferation of the human gastric
17 adenocarcinoma (AGS) cell line. Nicotine, a component of cigarette smoke, has been
18 reported to promote tumor growth [42]. Shin *et al.* [41] analyzed microRNAs induced

1 by nicotine treatment of AGS cells and found upregulation of miR-16 and miR-21,
2 which are known to be associated with gastric cancer. They further found that induction
3 of these miRNAs is mediated by NF- κ B, and dependent on COX-2, EP2 and EP4. On
4 the basis of these findings, the authors suggested that nicotine upregulates miR-16 and
5 miR-21 in gastric cancer cells via EP2 and EP4 receptor-mediated NF- κ B
6 transcriptional activation. Given that NF- κ B activity regulates COX-2 expression in
7 many cases of tumorigenesis [43-45], these combined results suggest the presence of
8 the COX-2-PGE₂-EP2/4-NF- κ B loop that can amplify inflammation associated with
9 tumorigenesis. However, the above three studies [43-45] were carried out in rather
10 simplified model systems, one being polyposis and the other cultured cells, and did not
11 address the role of inflammation directly. Therefore, detailed cross-talk between
12 inflammation and tumors and the significance of PG signaling, EP2 in particular, should
13 be examined in more suitable inflammation-associated colon cancer models such as
14 azoxymethane-dextran sodium sulfate model [46].

15

16 **PGs and recruitment of inflammatory cells**

17 At inflammatory sites, abundant infiltration of inflammatory cells such as
18 neutrophils, eosinophils and macrophages is seen, and recruitment of these cells is

1 mostly carried out by expression of chemokines. There is now substantial evidence that
2 PGs are involved in induction of chemokines and resultant infiltration of inflammatory
3 cells at the inflamed site (Figures 2 and 3). For example, as discussed above, the
4 PGI₂-IP signaling synergizes with IL-1 β in CIA to augment expression of CXCL7, a
5 chemokine for neutrophils, fibroblasts and endothelial cells [7]. In IA, one of the
6 genes induced by the PGE₂-EP2-NF- κ B pathway in endothelial cells is MCP-1, which
7 recruits and activates macrophages to infiltrate the vessel wall [35]. Recruited
8 macrophages then produce a variety of pathological molecules such as cytokines and
9 proteinases [47, 48]. The contribution of MCP-1-mediated macrophage recruitment to
10 the pathogenesis of IA was well defined by *in vivo* experiments using MCP-1-deficient
11 mice, using a dominant negative form of MCP-1 or chlodronate liposome to deplete
12 macrophages [47, 49]. Depletion of macrophages or the inhibition of MCP-1
13 remarkably prevented IA formation through the suppression of macrophage-evoked
14 inflammation. Thus, the PG signaling induces switching of active cell populations
15 participating in inflammation of affected tissues. In a model of *Helicobacter*
16 *pylori*-infected gastric tumor, Oshima *et al.* [9] found that bacterial colonization and
17 PGE₂ signaling through EP4 cooperatively induced the expression of MCP-1, and this
18 was the major pathway for recruiting macrophages to gastric mucosa, which function as

1 tumor-associated macrophages to promote gastric tumors. In the Lewis lung tumor
2 transplantation model, Katoh *et al.* [50] found COX-2 dependent CXCL12 (SDF1 α)
3 expression in stromal fibroblasts surrounding the tumor, which is significantly
4 attenuated in mice deficient either EP3 or EP4, and is reproduced by the addition of
5 EP3- or EP4-selective agonists. CXCL12 is a chemokine for CD34⁺ bone marrow cells,
6 T cells, B cells and DCs, and in the above study, the authors suggested that the cells
7 recruited from bone marrow function for angiogenesis [50]. By contrast, Wang *et al.*
8 [51] detected high levels of expression of CXCL1 in human colorectal cancers and
9 adenomas of Apc^{min} mice. They further found that CXCL1 is induced by PGE₂ *in vitro*
10 in cultured colon cancer cell lines, and showed that some of the PGE₂ effects on tumor
11 growth are ameliorated by the addition of antibody to CXCL1 [51]. These findings
12 combined together suggest that, under different inflammatory conditions, PGs can
13 induce various chemokines, which then promote inflammation further (Figures 2 and 3).

14 In addition to induction of chemokine expression, one type of PG, PGD₂ can
15 directly recruit and activate Th2 lymphocytes and eosinophils by acting on CRTH2/DP2,
16 which belongs to the chemokine receptor family [52], and this action is exerted in
17 various allergic conditions [53]. Such CRTH2/DP2 actions on these inflammatory
18 cells together with actions of DP1 possibly on sensitized airway epithelium [54]

1 contribute to elicitation of allergic inflammation in animal model of asthma.

2

3 **PGs and tissue remodeling**

4 If inflammation does not subside, it often leads to tissue remodeling. Tissue
5 remodeling includes tissue metaplasia, granulation, angiogenesis and fibrosis, and roles
6 of PGs in these processes have been reported (Figure 4). PGs, depending on their type,
7 involved tissues and contexts, either facilitate or suppress tissue remodeling. For
8 example, in the ovalbumin (OVA)–induced allergic asthma model, various genes
9 associated with tissue remodeling (including the ADAM family of tissue proteases and
10 goblet cell metaplasia) are induced in the airway epithelium, and such induction is
11 negatively modulated by PGE₂-EP3 signaling [55]. Regulation of angiogenesis by PGs
12 is found in chronic inflammation models such as CIA [7] and tumor-associated
13 inflammation [40, 50, 51, 56-59] (Figure 4). Such signaling is mainly exerted by
14 mesenchymal cells involved in inflammation; synovial cells in CIA and stromal
15 fibroblasts in tumor-associated inflammation. Regulation of angiogenesis by PGs
16 involves induction of both direct angiogenic factors such as VEGF and chemokines that
17 recruit endothelial precursors to affected sites and induce tubular formation. For
18 example, expression of VEGF by synovial fibroblasts is amplified by PGI₂-IP signaling

1 [7], and PGE₂ induces VEGF production from cultured cancer cell lines *in vitro* [56, 57].
2 In addition, upregulated expression of VEGF in cancer lesions and stromal tissues via
3 EP2 or EP3 is suppressed through the inhibition of PG signaling *in vivo* [40, 58, 59].
4 PGs also regulate chemokine-mediated angiogenic pathways, such as CXCL12-CXCR4
5 and CXCL1-CXCR2 signaling, which promote angiogenesis via recruiting endothelial
6 precursors, and support tumourigenesis [50, 51].

7 Tissue fibrosis is characterized by fibroblast proliferation and excessive deposition
8 of collagen and other extracellular matrix proteins, which exceeds normal repair
9 processes for damaged tissues. Tissue fibrosis often represents the end stage of
10 inflammation by disrupting tissue architecture and functions. PGs have been reported to
11 exert both pro-fibrotic and anti-fibrotic actions (Figure 4). For example, Oga *et al.* [60]
12 studied bleomycin-induced pulmonary fibrosis, a model of idiopathic pulmonary
13 fibrosis of humans, and found that loss of FP attenuated pulmonary fibrosis without
14 affecting inflammatory responses and with decreased collagen synthesis *in vivo*,
15 indicating that PGF_{2α}-FP signaling is involved in the fibrosis process itself. Consistent
16 with this, the addition of PGF_{2α} enhanced collagen synthesis in lung fibroblasts *in vitro*
17 in a FP-dependent manner, and, intriguingly, in a manner additive to TGF-β [60]. These
18 results suggest that PGF_{2α} functions as a pro-fibrotic mediator in pulmonary fibrosis.

1 Indeed, levels of $\text{PGF}_{2\alpha}$ were significantly elevated in bronchial alveolar lavage fluid of
2 idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis patients [60]. By contrast, Lovgren *et al.* [61] found that
3 loss of COX-2 (but not loss of mPGES-1) augmented fibrosis and worsened lung
4 function in a bleomycin-induced pulmonary fibrosis model, which was mimicked by
5 loss of IP but not that of either EP2 or EP4. On the basis of these findings, they
6 suggested that PGI_2 -IP signaling protects against pulmonary fibrosis. A protective action
7 of PGI_2 -IP signaling against fibrosis was also reported in heart, where IP and TP
8 signaling appear to function antagonistically [62, 63]. These findings indicate
9 importance of selective manipulation of signaling pathways of PGs to control tissue
10 remodeling (Figure 4).

11

12 **Concluding remarks and future directions**

13 In this review, we have discussed the roles of PGs in various animal models of
14 chronic inflammation. Because the primary focus of this review is the role of PGs in
15 transition to and maintenance of chronic inflammation, we have chosen recent finding
16 pertinent to this role and discussed their implication. From the findings discussed here,
17 it is now clear that PGs function as more than acute inflammatory mediators, and are
18 involved in various aspects of chronic inflammation. However, in addition to the

1 pro-inflammatory actions described here, PGs also exert anti-inflammatory and
2 immunoregulatory roles such as suppression of macrophage activation [64],
3 tumor-induced immunosuppression [65, 66] and induction of regulatory T cells [67]. It
4 is therefore important to clarify not only how PGs mediate chronic inflammation but
5 also how PG-mediated anti-inflammatory circuit is integrated and, in some cases, down
6 regulated in chronic inflammation. It is also important to examine whether PG signaling
7 induce any epigenetic changes in the process of chronic inflammation, which may be
8 very important to sustain the inflammatory state. These are future directions of
9 inflammation research. We should also point out that, due to the space limit, we do not
10 address interaction of PGs and other lipid mediators such as resolvins, which are
11 proposed to function in termination of inflammation. This topic is discussed in a recent
12 excellent review [68]. Finally, because animal models do not exactly recapitulate all
13 aspects of human diseases, the findings discussed here must be validated in human
14 diseases. Nonetheless, research in this area is therapeutically important, given the
15 burden of chronic diseases in our society, and is promising, given that selective
16 manipulation of receptors rather than general COX and mPGES inhibition apparently
17 provides significant benefits.

18

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8

9

10 **Figure Legends**

11 Figure 1. The role of prostaglandin system as a cytokine amplifier.

12 The contribution of prostaglandin system to the amplification of cytokine signaling is
13 shown. Cytokines in blue are those whose signaling is amplified by the prostaglandin
14 system. PGE₂ synergistically induces IL-6/IL-1 β /COX-2 expression with LPS via EP4
15 in macrophages (red dashed box at upper left) [9]. PGE₂ also promotes the
16 differentiation of Th1 from naïve T cells synergistically with IL-12 via EP2/EP4 (red
17 dashed box at upper right) [10]. PGE₂ stimulates dendritic cells (DCs) and promotes
18 IL-23 production synergistically with CD40 and toll-like receptor (TLR) signaling.
19 PGE₂ then enhances the expansion of Th17 cells with IL-23 (red dashed box at lower
20 right) [10, 21, 25, 26]. PGI₂ also induces pro-inflammatory cytokines such as IL-6 from
21 synovial fibroblasts synergistically with IL-1 β (red dashed box at lower left) [7].

22

23 Figure 2. The proposal mechanisms of chronicity of inflammation contributing to

1 intracranial aneurysm formation.

2 Positive feedback loop consisting of COX-2-PGE₂-EP2-NF-κB and macrophage
3 infiltration in arterial walls by NF-κB-mediated MCP-1 expression contribute to the
4 chronic inflammation responsible for intracranial aneurysm formation .

5

6 Figure 3. The contribution of prostaglandin system to the recruitment of immune cells.

7 PGE₂ and PGI₂ induce chemoattractants (MCP-1, CXCL12, CXCL7) resulting in the
8 recruitment of inflammatory cells to affected sites.

9

10 Figure 4. The contribution of prostaglandin system to tissue remodeling.

11 Prostaglandin system promotes or suppresses tissue remodeling, including metaplasia,
12 fibrosis and angiogenesis, in a context-dependent manner. Red or blue color indicates
13 the contribution of prostaglandin system to the promotion or suppression of tissue
14 remodeling, respectively.

15

16

Figure 1.

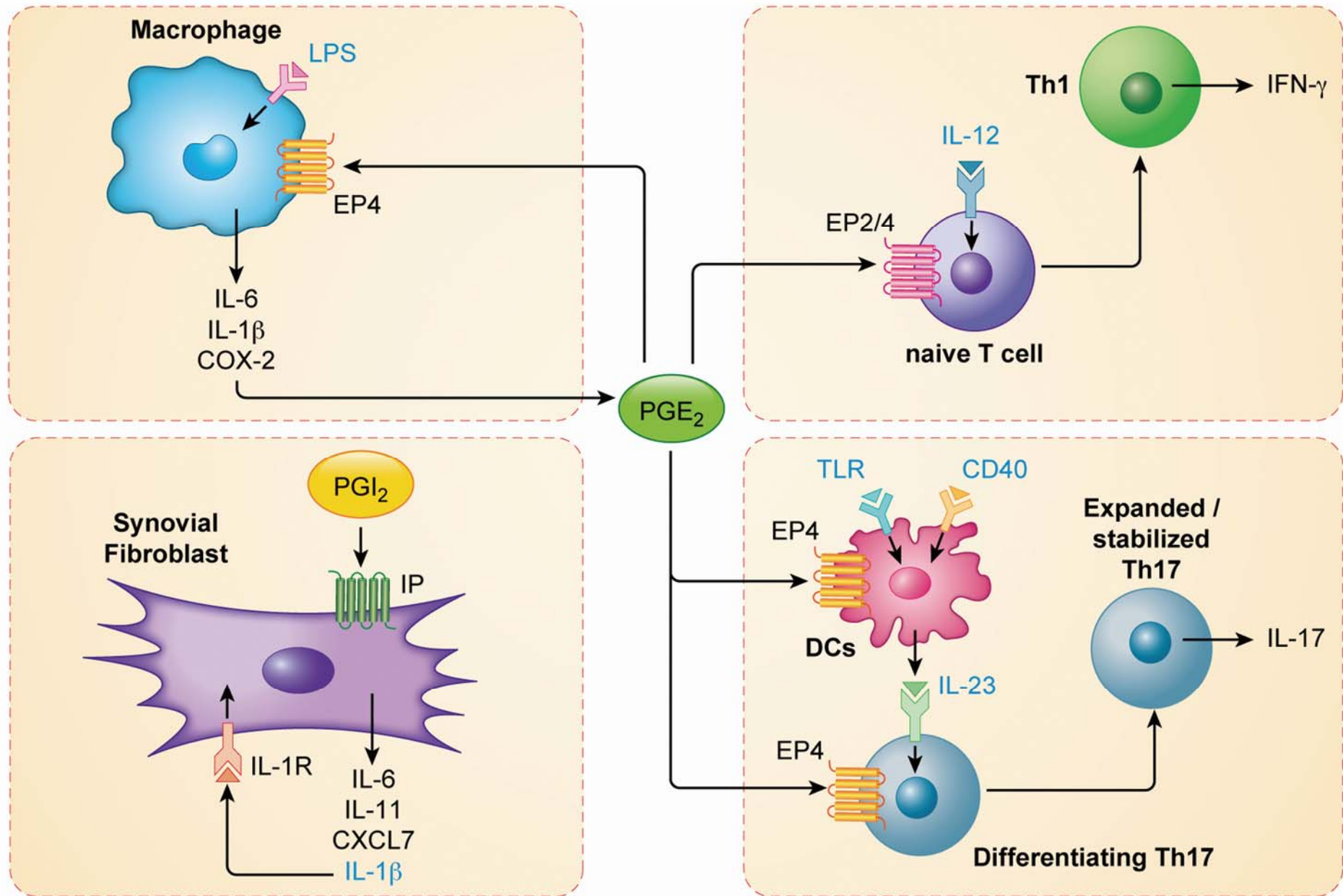


Figure 2.

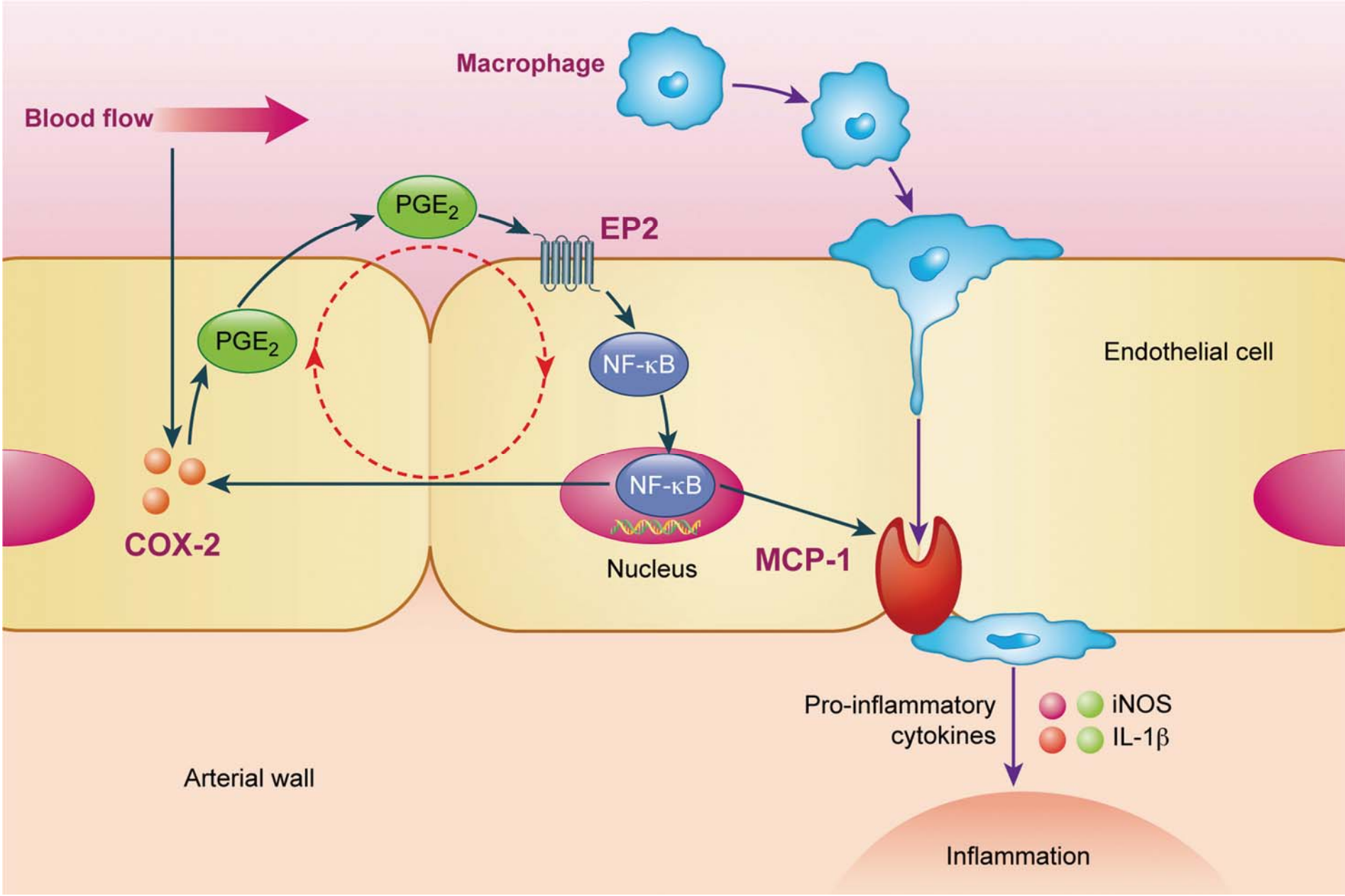


Figure 3.

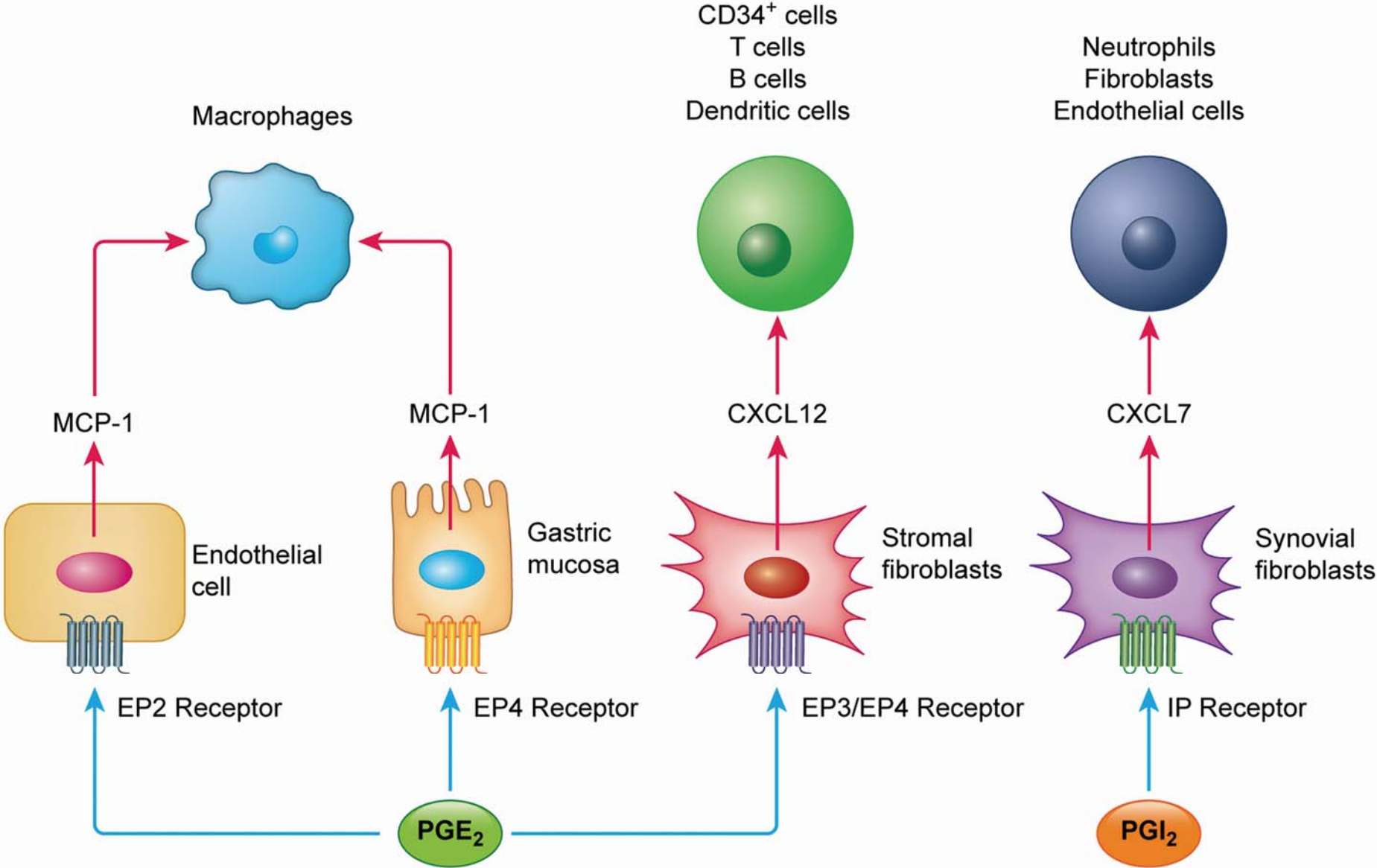


Figure 4.

Tissue Remodeling

