

Amyloid- β peptides induce cell proliferation and macrophage colony-stimulating factor expression via the PI3-kinase/Akt pathway in cultured Ra2 microglial cells

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Abstract Alzheimer's disease is characterized by numerous amyloid- β peptide (A β) plaques surrounded by microglia. Here we report that A β induces the proliferation of the mouse microglial cell line Ra2 by increasing the expression of macrophage colony-stimulating factor (M-CSF). We examined signal cascades for A β -induced M-CSF mRNA expression. The induction of M-CSF was blocked by a phosphatidylinositol 3 kinase (PI3-kinase) inhibitor (LY294002), a Src family tyrosine kinase inhibitor (PP1) and an Akt inhibitor. Electrophoretic mobility shift assays showed that A β enhanced NF- κ B binding activity to the NF- κ B site of the mouse M-CSF promoter, which was blocked by LY294002. These results indicate that A β induces M-CSF mRNA expression via the PI3-kinase/Akt/NF- κ B pathway. © 2005 Federation of European Biochemical Societies. Published by Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is characterized by the presence of senile plaques in the brain composed primarily of amyloid- β peptide (A β). Microglia have been reported to surround the A β plaques, which provokes a microglia-mediated inflammatory response that contributes to neuronal cell loss [1]. On the other hand, microglia play an important role in the clearance of A β by phagocytosis, primarily through scavenger receptor class A (SR-A, CD204), scavenger receptor-BI (SR-BI) and CD36 [2–4]. Recently, it has been reported that

microglia isolated from CD36-deficient mice had marked reductions in A β -induced cytokine/chemokine secretion [5]. CD36 binds to A β in vitro [6], and is physically associated with members of the Src family tyrosine kinase [7,8], which transduce signals from this receptor [9]. Other receptors such as receptor for advanced glycosylation end-products (RAGE), integrins and heparan sulfate proteoglycans, also have been reported to bind with A β [10].

There are many reports that microglia are activated by A β , but it has been unclear whether A β is associated with the proliferation of microglia. Here we report that A β induces proliferation of the microglial cell line Ra2 by increasing macrophage colony-stimulating factor (M-CSF) expression. We also elucidated signal transduction pathways from A β -treatment to M-CSF mRNA expression in microglia.

2. Materials and methods

2.1. Materials

Synthetic human A β 25–35, A β 1–42 and A β 1–16 were obtained from Peptide Institute Inc. A β 35–25 was from AnaSpec Inc. A β 25–35, A β 1–16 and A β 35–25 were dissolved in H₂O and A β 1–42 was dissolved in 0.1% NH₃ according to the manufacturer's instructions. Anti-phospho-Akt (Serine 473), anti-Akt, anti-phospho-I κ B α (Serine 32), and anti-I κ B α antibodies were from Cell Signaling. PP1 was from Biomol. Wortmannin, LY294002 and Akt inhibitor [1L-6-hydroxymethyl-chiro-inositol 2-(R)-2-O-methyl-3-O-octadecylcarbonate] were from Calbiochem. Piceatannol was from Sigma-Aldrich. Mouse recombinant granulocyte-macrophage colony-stimulating factor (mrGM-CSF) was from Pharmingen. Mouse recombinant M-CSF (mrM-CSF) was from Techne. A β 25–35 and A β 1–42 were used at 50 and 10 μ M, respectively, in all studies unless otherwise stated.

2.2. Cell culture

Microglial cell line Ra2 was cultured in MGI medium [Eagle's MEM supplemented with 0.2% glucose, 5 μ g/ml bovine Insulin (Sigma-Aldrich), and 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS, Invitrogen)] and 0.8 ng/ml mrGM-CSF (Pharmingen) [11]. Before A β -treatment, Ra2 cells were cultured in MGI medium without mrGM-CSF for 16 h. Primary microglia and primary astrocytes were prepared using newborn C57BL/6 mice as described previously [12], and cultured in MGI medium containing 0.8 ng/ml mrGM-CSF. The neuroblastoma cell line Neuro2a was cultured in DMEM supplemented with 10% FBS. Primary neurons were obtained from the cortex of 14-day-old C57BL/6 mouse embryos as described previously [13] with some modifications. Neural cells cultured in DMEM supplemented with TIS (5 μ g/ml

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Abbreviations: AD, Alzheimer's disease; A β , amyloid- β ; EMSA, electrophoretic mobility shift assay; FBS, fetal bovine serum; GM-CSF, granulocyte-macrophage colony stimulating factor; M-CSF, macrophage colony-stimulating factor; PBS, phosphate-buffered saline; PI3-kinase, phosphatidylinositol 3 kinase; RAGE, receptor for advanced glycation end-products

transferrin, 5 μ g/ml insulin, and 5 ng/ml selenite, Sigma), 10% FBS and 5 μ M cytosine arabinoside (Ara-C, Sigma). Before A β -treatment, primary neurons were cultured in MGI medium for 16 h.

2.3. Cell proliferation (WST-1) assay

Cell proliferation was determined by analyzing the conversion of WST-1 (light red) to its formazan derivative (dark red) using a WST-1 Cell Counting Kit (Dotite). For neutralization of M-CSF, anti-mouse M-CSF antibody (Techne) was added to the culture medium. At the end of the experiments, the media were replaced, and cells were incubated with 10 μ l of the WST-1 reagent for 1 h at 37 $^{\circ}$ C in 5% CO₂. The absorbance at 450 nm was measured by using a microplate reader (Bio-Rad).

2.4. Immunoblotting

Cells were lysed in sample buffer (62.5 mM Tris-HCl, pH 6.8, 2% SDS, 10% glycerol, 5% 2-mercaptoethanol, and 5% bromophenol blue). Then 50 μ g of total protein was resolved by SDS-PAGE and transferred to PVDF membranes (Millipore). Immunoblotting was performed with the appropriate antibody using the enhanced chemiluminescence (ECL) system (Amersham Pharmacia).

2.5. RT-PCR and real-time quantitative RT-PCR

Total RNA was isolated using an RNeasy mini kit (Qiagen) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Two micrograms of total RNA was reverse transcribed to cDNA using SuperScript II Reverse Transcriptase (Invitrogen). For RT-PCR and real-time quantitative PCR, the primers for mouse M-CSF and β -actin genes were as follows (5' to 3'): M-CSF sense, CCATCGAGACCTCAGACAT; M-CSF antisense1 for RT-PCR, CCTAAGGGAAAGGGTCCTGA; M-CSF antisense2 for real-time PCR, GATGAGGACAGACAGGTGGA; β -actin sense, AGTGTGACGTTGACATCCGT; and β -actin antisense, GCAGCTCAGTAACAGTCCGC. Conventional RT-PCR was performed using 0.5 μ l cDNA, and 30 cycles of amplification for M-CSF or 23 cycles for β -actin at 94 $^{\circ}$ C for 1 min, 60 $^{\circ}$ C for 1 min and 72 $^{\circ}$ C for 1 min. Quantitative real-time PCR was performed on the Smart Cycler system (Takara) using the following program: 2 min at 50 $^{\circ}$ C, 10 min at 95 $^{\circ}$ C, followed by 40 cycles of 15 s at 95 $^{\circ}$ C, 1 min at 60 $^{\circ}$ C, and 8 s at 72 $^{\circ}$ C. The reactions were carried out using 0.5 μ l cDNA with Smart Kit for Sybr Green I (Eurogentec). To check the specificity of reactions, a single band of the correct size was visualized by running out on 2% agarose gels. Values were expressed as relative expression of M-CSF mRNA normalized to the β -actin mRNA.

2.6. Nuclear extracts and electrophoretic mobility shift assays (EMSA)

Nuclear extracts of Ra2 cells were prepared as previously described [14]. Three micrograms of nuclear extract was incubated with 5 fmol of ³²P end-labeled double-stranded oligonucleotides derived from M-CSF promoter in binding buffer [10 mM Tris, pH 7.5, 4% glycerol, 1 mM MgCl₂, 50 mM NaCl, 0.5 mM EDTA, 0.5 mM DTT, and 0.05 μ g/ μ l poly(dI-dC)] for 20 min at room temperature. For competition assays, 1 pmol of unlabeled probe was incubated in the reaction mix before the addition of the ³²P-labeled probe. The oligonucleotides used in these experiments were as follows: NF- κ B probe, 5'-GCC-TTGAGGGAAAGTCCCTAGGGG-3'; AP1 probe, 5'-GTAGT-ATGTGTCAGTGCC-3'. For supershift assays, nuclear extracts were preincubated with anti-NF- κ B p50 or p65 antibodies (Santa Cruz) for 1 h at 4 $^{\circ}$ C. The DNA-protein complex was separated on 5% native polyacrylamide gels. The dried gels were visualized using an Image Reader (Fujifilm).

2.7. Statistical analysis

Results are expressed as means \pm S.D. Statistical analysis was done by a two-tailed Student's *t* test. A *P* value of <0.05 was considered statistically significant.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. A β promotes microglial cell proliferation

To investigate the possible role of A β in the activation of microglia, we examined if A β could sustain the cell prolifera-

tion of microglial cell line Ra2. Ra2 cells proliferate in MGI medium containing GM-CSF and stop proliferating without GM-CSF [11]. Under MGI medium without GM-CSF, the effects of M-CSF or A β on the proliferation of Ra2 cells were analyzed by the WST-1 assay. The addition of M-CSF induced cell proliferation dose-dependently (Fig. 1A). A β 25–35 increased Ra2 cell proliferation dose-dependently (Fig. 1B). A β 25–35 does not occur naturally but has shown to mimic the effects of A β 1–42 [15–17]. A β 1–42, which occurs in a brain affected by AD, was more effective in cell proliferation than A β 25–35 (Fig. 1C). It has been reported that A β stimulates the proliferation of microglia to enclose A β plaque [18,19]. We examined if M-CSF provoked the cell proliferation with A β -treatment. The effect of A β on the proliferation was blocked by anti-M-CSF antibody (*P* < 0.05) (Fig. 1D). The treatment with M-CSF was performed as a control. The effect of M-CSF was blocked by anti-M-CSF antibody (Fig. 1D). We found that A β induces microglial cell proliferation by M-CSF production.

3.2. A β induces M-CSF mRNA expression in microglia

To examine whether A β could induce M-CSF mRNA expression in microglia, Ra2 cells were stimulated with A β 25–35 for 16 h at various concentrations. A β 25–35 induced M-CSF mRNA expression dose-dependently (Fig. 2A). As a result of real-time quantitative RT-PCR (Fig. 2A, right), M-CSF mRNA induction by 50 μ M A β 25–35 was about sevenfold of non-treated control. A β 25–35 induced time-dependent increases in M-CSF mRNA expression (Fig. 2B). A β 1–42 also induced M-CSF expression (Fig. 2A and B). GM-CSF mRNA, on the other hand, was not induced by A β 25–35 or A β 1–42 (data not shown). A β 1–16 did not induce M-CSF mRNA expression (Fig. 2C), nor

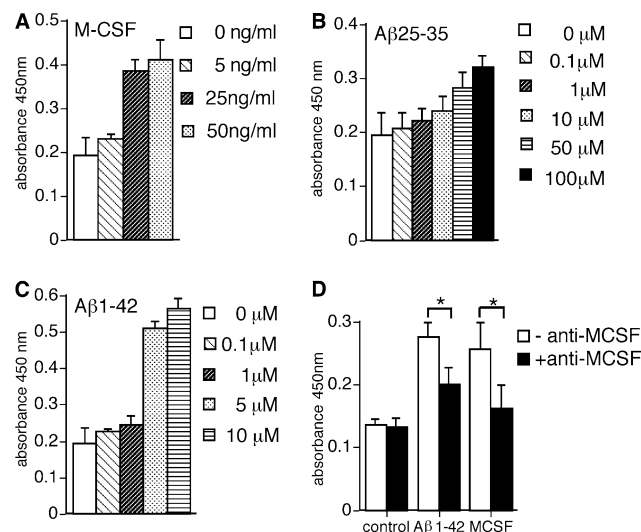


Fig. 1. A β promotes Ra2 cell proliferation. Cellular proliferation was measured by WST-1 assay. (A, B and C) Ra2 cells were incubated with the medium containing M-CSF, A β 25–35 or A β 1–42 at indicated concentrations for 48 h. (D) Ra2 cells were preincubated with 1 μ g/ml anti-M-CSF antibody for 1 h before treatment with 5 μ M A β 1–42 or 25 ng/ml M-CSF for 24 h. Mean \pm S.D. values from a single experiment were performed in triplicate. Similar results were obtained in each of two separate experiments (**P* < 0.05).

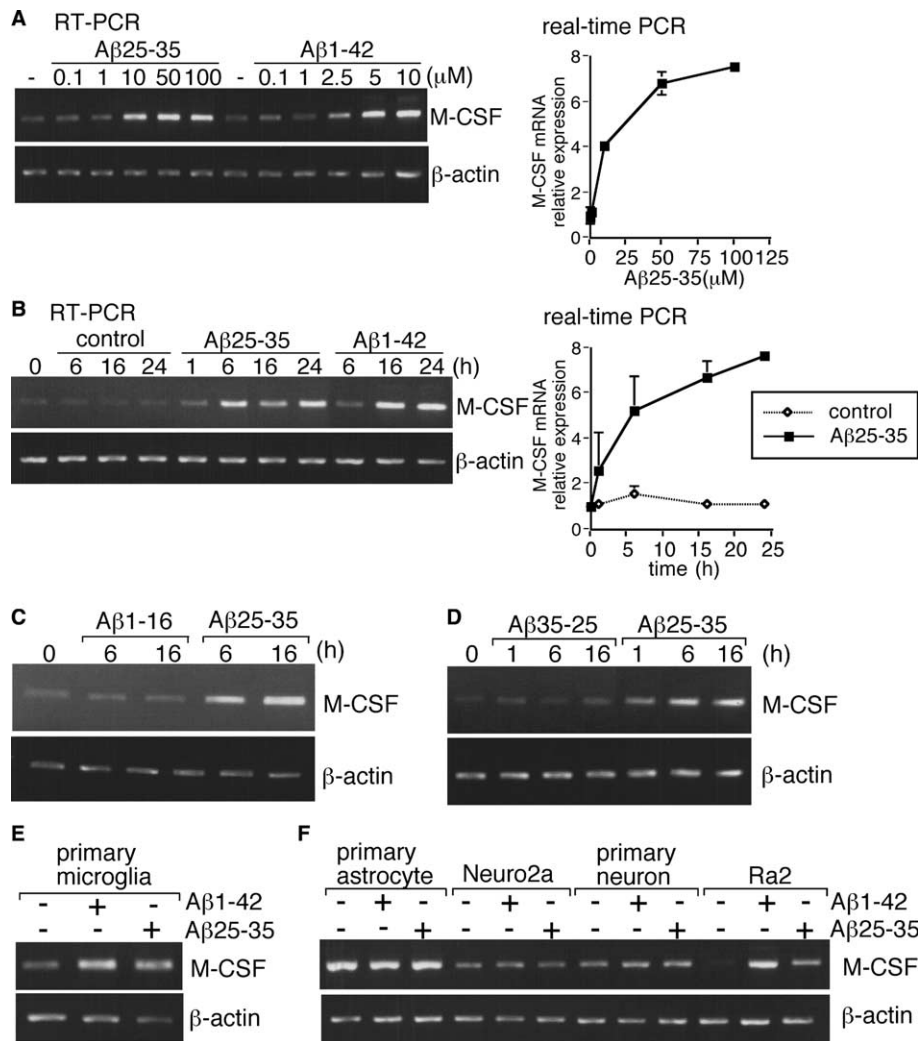


Fig. 2. A β stimulates M-CSF mRNA expression in microglia. (A and B) M-CSF and β -actin mRNA were determined by RT-PCR (left) and quantified by real-time PCR (right). Data represent means \pm S.D. of three separate determinations. Ra2 cells were treated with A β 25–35 or A β 1–42 at indicated concentrations for 16 h (A). Time course of M-CSF relative expression of Ra2 cells treated with 50 μ M A β 25–35 and 10 μ M A β 1–42 (B). (C and D) Ra2 cells were treated with 50 μ M A β 1–16 (C) or 50 μ M A β 35–25 (D) for indicated times. (E and F) Primary microglia (E), primary neurons, primary astrocytes and neuroblastoma Neuro2a (F) were treated with 50 μ M A β 25–35 or 10 μ M A β 1–42 for 16 h.

did A β 35–25, which was a reverse sequence of A β 25–35 (Fig. 2D). In primary microglia, as well as in Ra2 cells, A β 25–35 and A β 1–42 increased M-CSF mRNA expression (Fig. 2E). We also examined whether A β induced increases in M-CSF mRNA expression in primary astrocytes, primary neurons, and neuroblastoma cells Neuro2a. These cells constitutively expressed M-CSF mRNA, but A β 25–35 and A β 1–42 did not induce further expression of M-CSF mRNA (Fig. 2F). These results demonstrate that A β induced M-CSF mRNA expression in only microglia.

3.3. A β induces M-CSF mRNA via Src family tyrosine kinase and PI3-kinase signal cascade

Because our studies showed that A β 25–35 had induced M-CSF expression in Ra2 cells, we examined signal cascades for A β -induced M-CSF mRNA expression by using several chemical inhibitors. The Src family tyrosine kinase is associated with CD36, which transduces signal cascades by A β

[7,8,20]. In addition, Syk tyrosine kinase is activated by A β [21]. First, we examined if M-CSF mRNA expression was induced by A β via tyrosine kinase, Src family and Syk. A specific inhibitor of Src family kinase, PP1, prevented the increase in M-CSF mRNA induced by A β (Fig. 3A). A Syk-selective inhibitor, piceatannol, also blocked the increase in M-CSF mRNA expression (Fig. 3B). Next, to investigate whether the PI3-kinase pathway regulates A β -induced M-CSF expression, Ra2 cells were pretreated with the PI3-kinase inhibitors, wortmannin or LY294002. Wortmannin and LY294002 inhibited the increase in M-CSF mRNA expression dose-dependently (Fig. 3C and D). Fig. 3E shows the result of quantitative amounts of mRNA by real-time PCR. It has been reported that A β stimulates tyrosine kinase, PI3-kinase and Akt activation in neural and macrophage cells [21–24]. However, analysis of these signal transductions in microglia has not been reported. This is the first report that A β induces M-CSF expression through

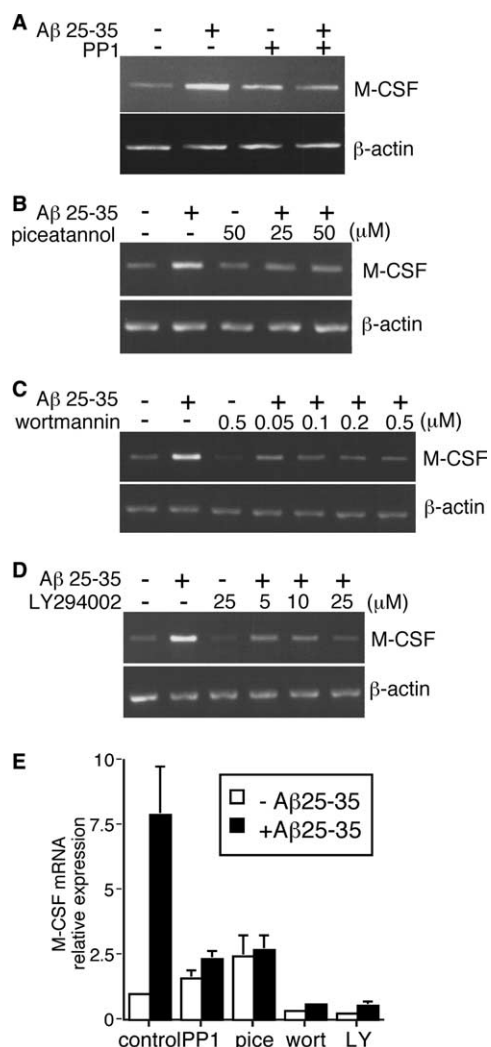


Fig. 3. Signal transduction for M-CSF mRNA expression induced by A β . (A–D) M-CSF and β -actin mRNA expression were determined by RT-PCR. Ra2 cells were preincubated with 10 μ M PPI (A), wortmannin (C), LY294002 (D) for 30 min or piceatannol (B) for 1 h before treatment of 50 μ M A β 25–35 for 6 h. Because all inhibitors were dissolved in DMSO, control cells were treated with DMSO. (E) M-CSF mRNA expressions were measured by real-time PCR (pice, piceatannol; wort, wortmannin; LY, LY294002). Data represent means \pm S.D. values of three separate determinations.

the Src family and Syk tyrosine kinases and the PI3-kinase in microglia.

3.4. A β activates Akt signaling pathway in microglia

We examined whether Akt was involved in the A β -induced M-CSF expression in Ra2 cells. Akt inhibitor blocked the increase of M-CSF mRNA expression (Fig. 4A). Immunoblotting analysis revealed that Akt was transiently phosphorylated at serine 473 by A β (Fig. 4B). LY294002 and PPI suppressed the phosphorylation of Akt induced by A β (Fig. 4D). Piceatannol also blocked the phosphorylation of Akt (Fig. 4E). Because tyrosine kinases and PI3-kinase activate MEK/Erk/Elk [25,26], we examined whether these signal pathways were related to M-CSF mRNA expression induced by A β . A β induced MEK and Erk1/2 phosphorylation in Ra2 cells. How-

ever, specific inhibitors of MEK, U0126 and PD98059 did not inhibit A β -induced M-CSF mRNA expression (data not shown). These results indicate that the tyrosine kinases, Src family and Syk, and the PI3-kinase activate Akt for A β -induced M-CSF expression.

3.5. A β activates NF- κ B via PI3-kinase signal cascade

Because NF- κ B is a target of Akt [27], next we examined if I κ B α phosphorylation was induced by A β . The phosphorylation of I κ B α on serine 32 results in the release and nuclear translocation of active NF- κ B [28]. I κ B α was phosphorylated time-dependently, the phosphorylation peaked at 60 min and then declined (Fig. 4C). The phosphorylation was inhibited by LY294002 and PPI (Fig. 4D). Piceatannol also blocked the phosphorylation of I κ B α (Fig. 4E).

The M-CSF promoter region has a putative NF- κ B binding site at –369–378 bp from the transcriptional start site [29]. To investigate whether this NF- κ B binding site is associated with A β -induced M-CSF expression, EMSA was carried out with nuclear extracts prepared from untreated and A β -treated Ra2 cells. The amount of protein binding to the NF- κ B probe was increased by A β -treatment (Fig. 5A, compare lanes 2 and 3). NF- κ B binding activity was almost completely eliminated by adding an excess of the unlabeled NF- κ B probe but not by the unlabeled AP1 probe (Fig. 5A, lanes 6 and 7). Anti-p50 antibody supershifted the complexes (Fig. 5A, lane 4) and anti-p65 antibody partially disrupted the DNA binding of the complexes (Fig. 5A, lane 5). To examine whether the A β -induced increase in nuclear NF- κ B binding activity correlated with tyrosine kinase and PI3-kinase, Ra2 cells were preincubated with chemical inhibitors before treatment with A β . LY294002 reduced A β -induced binding to the NF- κ B probe and piceatannol blocked the DNA-binding complex (Fig. 5B, lanes 4–7). These results indicate that A β enhances the binding of NF- κ B to M-CSF promoter via the Syk tyrosine kinase and the PI3-kinase.

We have shown in the present study that A β proliferates microglia and induces M-CSF via the PI3-kinase/Akt/NF κ B signal pathways. It has been reported that A β binds to CD36, which transduces signals via tyrosine kinase [6,20]. CD36 may participate in the initiation of intracellular signaling to M-CSF expression. RAGE also has been reported to induce NF- κ B activation to M-CSF production [30]. Further works are needed to prove the receptors of A β , which induces PI3-kinase/Akt/NF- κ B signal pathways to M-CSF mRNA expression. A β increases production of reactive oxygen species (ROS) and activates Akt in neural cells [23]. And in microglia CD36 mediates production of ROS in response to A β [31]. We found that antioxidants such as reduced glutathione and α -tocopherol slightly blocked M-CSF mRNA expression (data not shown). Also in microglia, ROS may partly participate in activating the signal cascade to M-CSF expression. It is important to reveal the relation among the receptors of A β , production of ROS and signal cascades.

Monsonogo et al. [32] showed that activated microglia migrated outside the brain and could present A β peptide to T lymphocytes. Further analysis of microglial activation may reveal the immunological mechanism of AD, and may enhance the prospects of immune manipulation to prevent AD.

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