Editorial

Editor's choice

J Nancy Hilda, Sulochana Dasb, Srikanth P Tripathya and Luke Elizabeth Hanna

Role of neutrophils in tuberculosis: A bird's eye view

Tuberculosis is one of the most common and lethal infections that afflict mankind. The study of its pathogenesis has occupied generations of investigators who have focused primarily on the role of host cellular immunity in containing the infection. Conversely, little attention has been paid to the initial stages of infection where the innate immune system's 'first responders', the neutrophils, may play an important role. In this issue, Hilda et al. review the role of neutrophils in the early response to Mycobacterium tuberculosis (MTB) infection and identify much-needed areas of investigation. They point out the importance of neutrophils in the early recruitment and activation of other immune responders through the generation of cytokines and, perhaps less appreciated, their role in the uptake and killing of the MTB bacilli. They also point out that the excessive neutrophil response may lead to tissue destruction which greatly facilitates granuloma formation, a hallmark of MTB infection. This well-balanced review updates our understanding of recent developments in neutrophil physiology and fairly represents the controversies in the field, as well as suggesting fruitful areas of further research.

Alan Cross University of Maryland School of Medicine, USA Email: across@som.umaryland.edu

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