

Review

Inflammatory Animal Models of Parkinson's Disease

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Abstract. Accumulating evidence suggests that microglia and peripheral immune cells may play determinant roles in the pathogenesis of Parkinson's disease (PD). Consequently, there is a need to take advantage of immune-related models of PD to study the potential contribution of microglia and peripheral immune cells to the degeneration of the nigrostriatal system and help develop potential therapies for PD. In this review, we have summarised the main PD immune models. From a historical perspective, we highlight first the main features of intranigral injections of different pro-inflammatory agents, including lipopolysaccharide (LPS), thrombin, neuromelanin, etc. The use of adenoviral vectors to promote microglia-specific overexpression of different molecules in the ventral mesencephalon, including α -synuclein, IL-1 β , and TNF, are also presented and briefly discussed. Finally, we summarise different models associated with peripheral inflammation whose contribution to the pathogenesis of neurodegenerative diseases is now an outstanding question. Illustrative examples included systemic LPS administration and dextran sulfate sodium-induced colitis in rodents.

Keywords: Parkinson's disease, animal models, microglia, inflammation, substantia nigra, lipopolysaccharide, thrombin, dextran sulfate sodium, adenovirus

INTRODUCTION

Parkinson's disease (PD) is characterized by a significant loss of dopaminergic neurons in the substantia nigra (SN) along with immunopositive intracellular neuronal inclusions for α -synuclein (α -syn) in the midbrain [1]. Different mechanisms have been suggested to play an essential role in the pathogenesis of PD, including impaired mitochondrial function, autophagy, loss of trophic support,

protein homeostasis dysfunction, and neuroinflammation. Since the original observation by McGeer et al. in 1988 showing reactive microglia in the SN of human postmortem PD brain tissue [2], evidence supporting an important role of microglia and inflammation in driving neurodegenerative events is overwhelming. For instance, at the genetic level, it has been shown that PD risk alleles likely alter the functioning of microglia-specific enhancers in the loci β -LRRK2 and FCGR2A, specifically through disrupting a SPIB-binding motif in the latter [3]. Mutations in GBA1, the gene encoding the lysosomal enzyme glucocerebrosidase, are considered the most significant risk factors for PD, which is believed to create

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toxic species of α -syn aggregates through defective lysosomal function [4]. A recent mouse brain cell atlas supports that Gba1 is mainly expressed by microglia and not by neurons [5]. A role for T cells is also implied by identifying specific major histocompatibility complex (MHC) haplotypes and non-coding SNPs in MHC genes as risk factors for PD [6]. Different animal models have consistently shown that early microglia activation may precede the death of dopaminergic neurons, suggesting that brain immune cells may play a leading role in the pathogenesis of PD. Pattern recognition receptors (PPRs) sense the environment by recognizing pathogen-associated molecular patterns (PAMPs) and danger-associated molecular pattern molecules (DAMPs) [7]. Illustrative examples of PRRs are toll-like receptors (TLRs), nod-like receptors (NLRs), and triggering receptors expressed on myeloid cells-2 (TREM2) [7], whose selective activation is thought to generate either a proinflammatory or a disease-associated microglia (DAM) phenotype [8]. With the advent of single-cell RNAseq of microglia under disease conditions, it has become evident that microglia may acquire an array of activation phenotypes much larger than originally believed including potentially protective microglia phenotypes (DAM) [8], deleterious microglial neurodegenerative phenotype (MGnD) [9] or yet to be defined (such as white matter-associated microglia (WAM) [10]). Single-cell RNA-sequencing from the murine midbrain identified a microglia subtype exhibiting typical pro-inflammatory features including enrichment of TLR signalling pathways [11]. snRNA-seq performed from ventral mesencephalic tissue obtained from postmortem PD patients and age-matched controls identified a disease-specific upregulation of microglia [12]. Interestingly, the authors identified a significant PD risk variant enrichment in microglia, showing the strongest association with the PD gene LRRK2 along with enrichment of NLRP3 inflammasome pathways [12]. In addition, a significant upregulation of GPNMB was found, which was associated with amoeboid microglia [12]. Of note, GPNMB is one of the most upregulated genes in DAM [13] and MGnD [9] phenotypes, and increased brain expression of GPNMG is associated with genome wide significant risk for PD [14].

A sustained and complex systemic activation of the immune system in PD is supported by increases of different cytokines (pro-inflammatory and anti-inflammatory) and immune-related molecules in CSF₄₉ and serum of PD patients [15, 16]. From the dif-₅₀

ferent cytokines, TNF deserves special consideration as blocking TNF has been found neuroprotective in PD models [17] and usage of TNF antibodies has been found to lower PD incidence among patients with inflammatory bowel disease [18]. Increasing evidence supporting an important role of the peripheral immune system in PD pathology is evident and most of the peripheral contributors to PD-related neuroinflammation have been recently described by Romero-Ramos and colleagues [15]. Among them, monocytes/macrophages have been involved in PD pathogenesis since it is known that these cells infiltrate the brain during PD through the CCL2-CCR2 axis [19]. Furthermore, genetic profiling analysis has identified a distinct transcriptomic signature in monocytes from early PD patients [20]. Some researchers have also shown that monocytes from PD patients cannot produce a healthy and balanced response to different stimuli, such as α -syn for example [21]. The involvement of T cells in the pathogenesis of PD has been also demonstrated, since CD4+ and CD8+ T cells surrounding neuromelanin+neurons have been detected in postmortem PD patients [22]. These observations pinpoint the interactions between brain innate and adaptive immune systems. The contribution of MHC II to PD pathology is inferred by studies demonstrating that MHC null mice are resistant to dopaminergic degeneration under conditions of α -syn overexpression [23]. Confirming these observations, genetic association with PD in the HLA region has been found, including HLA-DRA, HLA-DQA2, HLA-DQB1, HLA-DRB1, and HLA-DRB5 [24–27]. Importantly, a set of peptides derived from α -syn have been found to act as antigenic epitopes to further drive CD4+ and CD8+ cell responses in PD patients [28], thus linking preclinical studies and GWAS studies across the HLA regions. Finally, even though infiltrating B cells have not been detected in the brains of PD [22], a recent single cell RNA and BCR sequencing for B cells in PD patients and aged-matched controls identified increased memory B cells and increased IgG and IgA isotypes and more frequent class switch recombination events in PD patients [29]. All these findings have contributed to the redefinition of PD as a multisystemic disease that should be managed in a more integrative manner instead of the brain-focused classical approach. More research of this integrated network of communication that exists between peripheral immune cells and glial cells is necessary to improve our understanding of disease pathogenesis and hence provide more effective therapeutic approaches. All this information

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151 implies immune-associated models of PD as relevant
152 tools to study the potential contribution of microglia
153 to the degeneration of the nigrostriatal system and
154 help in developing potential therapies for PD.

155 PD MODELS USING INTRACEREBRAL 156 INJECTION

157 *Lipopolysaccharide*

158 Lipopolysaccharide (LPS; also known as endo-
159 toxin), a powerful pro-inflammogen, is the main
160 component of the outer membrane of Gram-negative
161 bacteria. The physiological response to LPS is medi-
162 ated by the TLR4 in association with other proteins as
163 the LPS binding protein (LBP), the monocyte antigen
164 CD14, and the myeloid differentiation factor (MD)-2
165 [30]. Injection of LPS into different brain struc-
166 tures such as the cerebral cortex, striatum, choroid
167 plexus-cerebral ventricles, or hippocampus triggers
168 the activation of astroglia and microglia [31–34].

169 Since the death of dopaminergic neurons in SN is a
170 key feature of PD, it was worth investigating whether
171 injection of LPS into SN could induce a glial reac-
172 tion and subsequent loss of dopaminergic neurons.
173 A single intranigral injection of 2 μg of LPS induces
174 microglial activation and loss of astrocytes on the
175 injection side, studied from two days after injection
176 [35]. Using a single injection of 5 μg of LPS into
177 the SN, microglial activation has been described as
178 early as 0.2 h after injection [36]. Importantly, the
179 number of TH positive neurons on the SN is reduced
180 on the ipsilateral side of injection [37]. Similarly,
181 dopamine (DA) levels, its metabolites, and TH activ-
182 ity (a key enzyme in the synthesis of DA) decreased
183 in both the SN and the striatum. The long-term anal-
184 ysis demonstrates that damage to the dopaminergic
185 system is permanent, as seen one year after injection
186 [35]. Other neuronal phenotypes, such as GABAergic
187 or serotonergic, are not affected, strongly suggest-
188 ing that injection of LPS into the SN is a specific
189 inflammatory animal model of PD [35]. Other authors
190 have modified this model, using increasing amounts
191 of LPS into the SN, as 5 μg [36], 10 μg [38], or
192 up to 30 μg [39]. Intrastratial injections have also
193 been used, employing either a low dose (0.05–5 μg)
194 [40] or a high dose (from 16 to 60 μg) [41, 42].
195 Intrapallidal injection has also been reported (10 μg)
196 [43]. Interestingly, SN is always identified among
197 the brain structures more prone to neuroinflammation.
198 The causes of this situation have not yet been
199 determined, although local differences in the num-

200 ber of microglia [44] and of the inflammation-related
201 factors produced by these cells have been suggested
202 [45]. In this sense, even systemic administration of
203 LPS (which will be discussed in more detail below)
204 has a specific effect on SN, increasing phagoptosis of
205 nigral neurons through a mechanism dependent on
206 the P2Y6 receptor [46].

207 Injection of LPS at a dose of 2 μg did not affect the
208 dopaminergic system when injected into the striatum
209 or the medial forebrain bundle (MFB, the primary
210 neural connection between these two structures) [35,
211 47]. However, it has been reported that the intrastr-
212 atial injection of 10 μg of LPS in Sprague Dawley rats
213 produces an inflammatory response, oxidative stress,
214 and activation of the TLR/NF-KB (Nuclear factor-
215 kappa B) pathway, with motor alterations [48]. Other
216 authors administered even higher amounts of LPS (up
217 to 60 μg), inducing degeneration of the dopaminergic
218 nigrostriatal system, motor impairment, and α -syn
219 accumulation in nigral dopaminergic neurons [41,
220 42], with mitochondria affected before dopaminergic
221 neuronal degeneration. Furthermore, a study using
222 the injection of 10 μg of LPS into the globus pal-
223 lidus reported changes in SN iron levels, which could
224 increase stress and subsequent vulnerability of nigral
225 dopaminergic neurons [43]. It has been suggested that
226 microglia could be responsible for differential sus-
227 ceptibility to LPS in brain structures [45]. On the
228 other hand, models based on high LPS doses could
229 deviate from physiological conditions not represent-
230 ing a ‘realistic’ disease model.

231 The effect of LPS on neuronal and glial cells
232 is prevented by compounds with anti-inflammatory
233 properties, such as dexamethasone (a potent and
234 widely used anti-inflammatory drug) [49], minocy-
235 cline (a tetracycline antibiotic) [50], simvastatin (a
236 lipid-lowering agent) [51], or naloxone (an opi-
237 oid receptor antagonist) [52]. It is striking that the
238 LPS-induced neurotoxic effects in SN appear to be
239 DA dependent since the inhibition of TH with α -
240 methyl-p-tyrosine prevents microglial activation and
241 LPS-induced damage to dopaminergic neurons [53].
242 Synergistic interaction of DA with other compounds
243 to produce a toxic effect has previously been shown;
244 of particular interest is the interaction with α -syn,
245 which changes its aggregation pattern *in vivo* in
246 contact with DA [54]. On the other hand, the contri-
247 bution made by DA metabolism through monoamine
248 oxidase (MAO, which produces H_2O_2) to oxidative
249 stress should not be ruled out.

250 Stress reinforces the deleterious effect of LPS on
251 SN. Therefore, the number of activated microglial

252 cells in the SN of rats treated with LPS and the loss of
253 astrocytes is almost doubled in stressed animals. The
254 reinforcement by stress of the effect induced by LPS
255 is similar (or even greater) on the expression levels
256 of key proinflammatory molecules, including tumor
257 necrosis factor (TNF), interleukin (IL)-1 β , IL-6, and
258 inducible NO synthase (iNOS), and the combined
259 effect of stress and LPS results in a huge expres-
260 sion of monocyte chemoattractant protein 1 (MCP-1)
261 mRNA. The number of TH positive neurons in the
262 SN, which is halved in the animals treated with LPS,
263 decreases to 25% of the control value when LPS is
264 injected into the SN of stressed animals. RU486, a
265 glucocorticoid receptor antagonist, prevents all these
266 effects [55]. These data point to the potential role of
267 stress in the initiation/development of the neurode-
268 generative process that leads to PD.

269 *Thrombin*

270 This multifunctional serine protease, well known
271 for its participation in the blood coagulation cas-
272 cade, has harmful effects on the CNS. When injected
273 into the SN of Wistar rats, thrombin induces the
274 expression of iNOS and proinflammatory cytokines
275 (TNF, IL-1 α , IL-1 β) in both the SN and the stri-
276 atum, increases microglial proliferation and activation,
277 and induces the disappearance of astroglial cells
278 around injection into the SN. Intranigral injection
279 of thrombin also reduces the number of dopamin-
280 ergic neurons in this structure without affecting other
281 neuronal phenotypes such as GABAergic neurons.
282 Similar results were described in Sprague Dawley
283 rats [56], including the activation of apoptosis and
284 the c-Jun N-terminal kinase (JNK) and p53 signal-
285 ing pathways [57]. When injected into the striatum,
286 thrombin induces a retrograde loss of dopamin-
287 ergic neurons in the SN, also affecting the fibers
288 immunopositive for TH that connect both structures
289 and inducing the formation of deposits of α -syn in
290 the SN, a hallmark of PD [58]. Blocking PAR4, a
291 thrombin receptor, prevents these effects suggesting
292 that thrombin could be involved in eliminating presy-
293 naptic elements in the striatum, leading to synaptic
294 loss [59].

295 Anti-inflammatory compounds prevent the effect
296 of compounds that trigger an inflammatory response.
297 For example, minocycline-induced suppression of
298 reactive oxygen species (ROS) derived from
299 NADPH oxidase and expression of proinflammatory
300 cytokines prevented the death of thrombin-induced
301 dopaminergic neurons induced by thrombin [60].

302 However, in the intranigral thrombin model, sys-
303 temic administration of dexamethasone, a widely
304 used anti-inflammatory drug, does not only fail to pre-
305 vent microglial activation but increases dopaminergic
306 neuron damage. In fact, dexamethasone does not
307 decrease the number of apoptotic cells, nor reduces
308 thrombin-induced α -syn deposits, but reduces the
309 amount of P-Akt. Interestingly, these effects appeared
310 to be mediated by increases induced by thrombin in
311 MAO, which was prevented by the MAO inhibitor
312 tranylcypromine [61]. This suggests that in cases
313 in which the integrity of the blood-brain barrier
314 (BBB) has been compromised and thrombin is in
315 contact with the cerebral parenchyma (as occurs
316 in processes that affect the cerebral vasculature,
317 such as stroke), the administration of dexametha-
318 sone as an anti-inflammatory therapy would be
319 counterproductive.

320 *α -Synuclein fibrils injections*

321 α -syn protein injection has been widely used in
322 the last decade to promote PD-like features focused
323 on α -syn aggregation. In particular, striatal injection
324 of α -syn pre-formed fibrils (PFF) demonstrated to
325 cause Lewy body-like inclusion and dopaminergic
326 degeneration in mice [62]. The relevance of neuroin-
327 flammation in this model was recently investigated
328 in mice by Earls et al. [63] demonstrating upregula-
329 tion of MCH-II as a signal of microglia activation
330 while also describing astrogliosis and lymphocyte
331 infiltration while similar results were obtained in
332 rats [64]. Interestingly, T-lymphocytes have been
333 proposed to limit phosphorylation of α -syn [65].
334 Injection of PFFs in transgenic models also demon-
335 strated the importance of neuroinflammation. For
336 instance, injection of PFF in A30P transgenic mice
337 also resulted in increased microgliosis [66]. Simi-
338 larly, injection of PFF in A53T transgenic mice
339 led to microglia activation and neurodegeneration.
340 However, genetic deletion of TLR2 or pharmacolog-
341 ical inhibition achieved to decrease microgliosis and
342 cytokine release while also protecting the dopamin-
343 ergic system [67]. Overall, injection of PFF is,
344 nowadays, one of the most used models for the study
345 of α -syn aggregation and transmission presenting
346 interesting similarities with the progression of PD in
347 humans. However, the inflammatory component of
348 this model is very relevant and should be considered
349 as one of the best choices for determining the role of
350 neuroinflammation in PD progression.

Other models using intracerebral injection

The tissue-type plasminogen activator (tPA, another serine protease) was the first drug approved (1995) by the Food and Drug Administration to treat acute ischemic stroke. However, beyond its beneficial abilities as a clot-dissolving agent, injection of tPA into Wistar rats' SN produces microglial activation and loss of astrocytes, degeneration of dopaminergic neurons without affecting GABAergic, disruption of BBB, α -syn deposits, increased expression of the brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), nNOS and iNOS, and alteration of phosphorylation levels in the proteins JNK, p38, extracellular signal-regulated kinases (ERK), Akt, glycogen synthase kinase (GSK)-3 β and cAMP responsive element-binding protein (CREB) [68].

Trisialoganglioside (GT1b; a glycosphingolipid containing sialic acid) is a surface molecule of mammalian cells with endogenous effects on the CNS. Injection of GT1b into the SN of female Sprague-Dawley rats induced the loss of NeuN and TH positive neurons in this structure in a dose-dependent manner. GT1b induced microglial activation and expression of iNOS in microglia (as soon as 4 h after injection). Inhibition of NOS by L-NG-nitroarginine methyl ester (L-NAME) partially prevented the deleterious effect of GT1b [69].

Finally, neuromelanin is a pigment found in human catecholaminergic neurons; however, extracellular neuromelanin has been suggested to activate microglial cells [70]. Zecca et al. [71] published a new model of microglial activation and 50% of dopaminergic degeneration after intranigral injection of human neuromelanin in rats.

Virus-mediated overexpression of proteins

Overexpression of α -syn has been used in the last decade as a model of parkinsonism focused on the aggregation capacities of α -syn inside the dopaminergic neurons [72]. Different adenovirus-associated vector (AAV) serotypes have been used to induce the expression of wild-type or mutant human α -syn. This overexpression is frequently associated with a neuronal promoter and locally injected in the midbrain region to investigate the effect on dopaminergic neurons (see [73]). Inflammation has been closely related to this model, for instance, Sanchez-Guajardo et al. [74] first described early microglia activation in rats' midbrain after AAV2/5 serotypes injections along

with lymphocytes infiltration. Same serotype was demonstrated to induce microglia activation independently of neurodegeneration in monkeys [75] and mice [76]. Neuroinflammation appeared in the striatum even before than in the SN, including increased levels of several cytokines like IL-1 β and TNF- α [77]. Furthermore, inhibition of microglia activation has been demonstrated to protect dopaminergic integrity after AAV9 serotype injection [78] and AAV2 serotype where MCH-II genetic deletion resulted in absence of neurodegeneration [23]. Conversely, further activation of microglia through LPS injection promoted cell-to-cell transmission of α -syn [79]. Interestingly, combination of this model with injection of PFF has also shown to increase microglia activation, microgliosis and dopaminergic degeneration [80].

However, Bido et al. [81] have recently published a novel variant of this model focusing on the effect of α -syn on microglial cells. In their study, they used a novel lentiviral FLEX system of conditional gene expression to provoke microglia-specific overexpression of mutant A53T α -syn associated with the expression of CX3CR1 receptor. The authors achieved high cell specificity with this method and discovered that microglial A53T α -syn overexpression promoted microglial activation and dopaminergic degeneration. Surprisingly, no intraneuronal α -syn accumulation was found, but rather microglia presented signs of α -syn accumulation like phosphorylation in serine S129. Microglia has been proposed as the cell responsible for pathological α -syn degradation. In fact, Heneka and colleagues have recently demonstrated that microglial cells can transport pathological α -syn from microglia to microglia through tunneling nanotubes for cooperative degradation [82]. However, under these conditions, α -syn fibrils induced the production of ROS, resulting in a compromised plasma membrane and mitochondrial network disintegration [82]. Both studies highlight the ability of microglia to isolate and degrade pathological α -syn. However, it is important to keep in mind that levels of pathological α -syn rely on the perfect balance of three independent processes associated with α -syn homeostasis: formation, aggregation rate, and clearance [83]. This view is exemplified in the model used by Bido et al. associated with overexpression of α -syn that provoked microglial exhaustion, inefficient degradation, microglia activation, and neuronal degeneration. Importantly, under these conditions, microglia showed a transcriptomic profile with upreg-

452 ulation of main proinflammatory cytokines like *Il1b*
453 and *Tnfa* as well as several chemokines. Addition-
454 ally, authors discovered upregulation of some of the
455 genes related to DAM phenotypes discovered in other
456 neurodegenerative diseases models like *ApoE* or *Itgax*
457 [8, 9]. Consequently, any disturbance of such a bal-
458 ance may make microglia prone to produce high
459 levels of neurotoxic ROS and proinflammatory fac-
460 tors, ultimately leading to cell death. Similarly, Zhang
461 and colleagues also promoted α -syn overexpression
462 in microglia primary cultures and microglial cell
463 lines [84], promoting a robust inflammatory response
464 and cytokine release that could be impaired by the
465 mGluR5 receptor activation.

466 While the recent study from Bido et al. has shed
467 light on the implication of α -syn in microglia acti-
468 vation and consequent dopaminergic degeneration,
469 other studies had previously used viral-mediated
470 overexpression to promote microglial activation. For
471 instance, in 2006, Ferrari and colleagues [85] proved
472 that chronic overexpression of IL-1 β in the SN leads
473 to progressive neurodegeneration in rats associated
474 with microglial activation. Similarly, overexpression
475 of TNF led to mild but progressive neurodegenera-
476 tion as soon as 14 days [86]. Notably, both studies
477 suggested independent effects of both cytokines, as
478 levels of IL-1 β after TNF overexpression remained
479 low and vice versa.

480 Interestingly, the combination of adenoviral
481 expression with classical PD models could become a
482 novel strategy for studying different immunomodula-
483 tory proteins and deciphering PD-specific microglial
484 phenotype. For instance, Ren et al. have studied
485 the role of TREM2 overexpression in a model
486 of 1-methyl-4-phenyl-1,2,3,6-tetrahydropyridine
487 (MPTP). TREM2 is thought to be a master regulator
488 of microglia phenotype. Upon activation, TREM2
489 promotes phagocytosis, ameliorated inflammatory
490 response and neuroprotection, but is also a key
491 receptor for neurodegenerative microglia [9] and
492 is needed for complete inflammatory response
493 (reviewed in [87]). In the context of dopaminergic
494 degeneration, overexpression of TREM2 led to
495 decreased neuroinflammation and dopaminergic
496 protection [88], which goes in line with later studies
497 focused on TREM2 knockout mice and supports the
498 view that the DAM phenotype is neuroprotective
499 [89].

500 Altogether, adenoviral overexpression offers a
501 broad panel of possibilities for studying microglial
502 activation as a PD model and represents a novel tool
503 that should highly impact future PD research.

504 The experimental animal models of PD described
505 so far, in one way or another, end up activating this
506 inflammatory response, indicating that the different
507 models of this disease show common mechanisms to
508 some extent.

509 As shown above, LPS is a direct inflamma-
510 tory model. On the contrary, substances such as
511 6-OHDA MPTP/MPP+, paraquat, or rotenone are
512 classic toxic models that produce the specific death
513 of dopaminergic neurons. Interestingly, its adminis-
514 tration eventually triggers a harmful inflammatory
515 reaction. In recent years, the idea that neuronal death
516 produced by these toxic substances was followed
517 by activation of the immune response has changed
518 towards a scenario in which the latter is activated
519 before (or even in the absence of) neuronal death, so
520 that microgliosis and not neurotoxicity would be the
521 determining factor in neuronal death. For example,
522 MPTP administration not only induced microglial
523 activation but also induced T lymphocyte (CD4+
524 and CD8+) infiltration into the brain of non-human
525 primates [90]. Thus, both peripheral and cerebral
526 immune responses are involved in the mechanism of
527 death induced by MPTP.

528 6-OHDA induces a strong production of free rad-
529 icals that was soon identified [91, 92], in addition to
530 inhibition of complex I of the mitochondrial respira-
531 tory chain, a mechanism shared by substances such
532 as MPTP/MPP+ and pesticides such as rotenone and
533 paraquat. In the 6-OHDA model, the loss of astrocytes
534 and the alteration of the BBB, the death of dopamin-
535 ergic neurons, and the activation of microglia observed
536 in the SN and the striatum was accompanied by the
537 infiltration of peripheral immune cells [93]. Interest-
538 ingly, these effects are prevented in female TLR4
539 KO animals (suggesting a gender-dependent mech-
540 anism) [94], and the treatment with urocortin [95] or
541 P2Y6R KO [46] exert protection. Since these sub-
542 stances also exert protection in the LPS model, the
543 inflammatory response arises as a common mecha-
544 nism to different molecular challenges shows that the
545 inflammatory response induced by LPS and 6-OHDA
546 share common pathways.

547 The effect of α -syn overexpression in dopamin-
548 ergic neurons of the SN produces a down-regulation
549 of TH and an increased sensitivity to MPTP/MPP+
550 [96]. Interestingly, α -syn can also exert a detrimental
551 effect on mitochondria, altering complex I-dependent
552 respiration [96, 97]. α -syn exerts an unquestionable
553 activating effect on microglia, especially the mis-
554 folded forms [98], which extends to monocytes [99,
555 100]. The Lewy pathology and neuroinflammation

556 can then mutually potentiate in a vicious cycle, facil-
557 itating the progression of the pathology and the death
558 of dopaminergic neurons [101, 102].

559 The involvement of the peripheral immune cells
560 in these PD models has also been described. For
561 instance, peripheral immune components infiltrate
562 the brain follow intracranial injection of any of the
563 toxic mediators discussed. Injection of LPS into the
564 SN causes infiltration of peripheral macrophages,
565 which contributes to the observed damage; in fact,
566 the depletion of peripheral macrophages using clo-
567 dronate not only eliminates their infiltration, but also
568 reduces other harmful effects of LPS injection, such
569 as microglial activation, loss of astrocytes, disrup-
570 tion of the BBB, and death of dopaminergic neurons
571 in the SN [103]. In the 6-OHDA model, the loss
572 of astrocytes and the alteration of the BBB, as well
573 as the activation of microglia and the infiltration of
574 peripheral immune cells observed in the SN and the
575 striatum, decreased when the concentration of DA
576 was depleted by the TH inhibitor α -MPT, suggesting
577 an interaction between endogenous DA and toxins
578 [93].

579 Any condition affecting the integrity of the BBB
580 can potentially let (or maybe induce) the infiltration
581 of peripheral immune cells. Alteration of the BBB
582 permeability has been shown in several animal mod-
583 els of PD, as for the intranigral/intrastratial injection
584 of thrombin [57] or tPA [68].

585 Circulating neutrophils, for example, are important
586 in ischemic stroke [104, 105], where they become the
587 main producers of matrix metalloproteinases (MMP-
588 9), disruptors of the BBB. Peripheral immune cells
589 are arising as interesting therapeutic targets in brain
590 disorders coursing with inflammation; thus, the treat-
591 ment with L-cysteine (a source of SH2 groups)
592 reduced infiltration of peripheral immune cells in the
593 brain, contributing to a better outcome of neuronal
594 deficits induced by LPS [106]. Overexpression of α -
595 syn in microglial cells induced by lentivirus produces
596 an inflammatory cycle involving infiltrating immune
597 cells [81].

598 PD MODELS COMBINING PERIPHERAL 599 AND CENTRAL INFLAMMATION

600 The data discussed above make clear the piv-
601 otal role of neuroinflammation in the development
602 of PD. Nevertheless, the increase in understanding
of PD has led Brundin and colleagues to redefin-
its pathogenesis by dividing the course of the dis-

605 ease into three temporal phases mediated by triggers,
606 facilitators, and aggravators [107]. Following this
607 concept, the inflammatory models described so far
608 could be the trigger that initiates the neurodegenera-
609 tive process. However, in the context of PD, triggers
610 alone may be insufficient for the pathology of PD to
611 develop, requiring facilitators. Consistent with this
612 view, our group was a pioneer in pointing to periph-
613 eral inflammation as one of these facilitators. In 2010,
614 Villarán et al. described that peripheral inflammation
615 induced by a model of ulcerative colitis based on
616 the administration of dextran sulfate sodium (DSS)
617 in drinking water exacerbates LPS-induced damage
618 to the nigral dopaminergic system [103]. The con-
619 tribution of chronic peripheral inflammation to the
620 pathogenesis of neurodegenerative diseases is now
621 an outstanding question. In the past 10 years, sev-
622 eral clinical data and animal models have supported
623 this view, suggesting peripheral inflammation as a
624 potential risk factor in neurodegenerative diseases,
625 especially in PD (for a review, see [108]). Sus-
626 tained activation of the peripheral innate and adaptive
627 immune systems occurs in the context of a wide
628 range of disorders ranging from chronic infectious
629 diseases to autoimmune and metabolic diseases, such
630 as obesity, diabetes mellitus, and atherosclerosis. In
631 addition, it is increasingly recognized that progres-
632 sive systemic inflammation takes place during aging,
633 a term known as inflammaging. Chronic peripheral
634 inflammation that accompanies these diseases has
635 been proposed to induce the production of proin-
636 flammatory cytokines that, following the endocrine
637 route or through the vagus nerve transmission, can
638 enter the brain [109]. In addition, increasing levels
639 of proinflammatory cytokines compromise the per-
640 meability of the BBB, allowing many immune blood
641 cells, including monocytes and T cells [110], to cross
642 the altered BBB. This realization arises from multiple
643 clinical studies showing elevated levels of inflamma-
644 tory mediators in patients with PD, providing strong
645 evidence for the interplay of the innate and adaptive
646 immune system in the CNS and periphery in the con-
647 text of PD and other synucleinopathies [15]. Some
648 authors have proposed that this humoral immune
649 response could be correlated with the nonmotor
650 symptoms of PD [109]. In this context, we can face
651 two possible scenarios: peripheral inflammation can
652 “prime” microglial cells, which may become over-
653 activated when a second noxious stimulus arrives.
654 On the other hand, peripheral inflammation can trans-
655 form previously “primed” microglia into an activated
656 state. In both cases, peripheral inflammation can trig-

Table 1
Models based on the combination of central and peripheral inflammation used to study the implications of systemic inflammation in the development of PD

Central challenge	Peripheral inflammation model	Reference
6-OHDA	LPS (0.4 mg/kg, 1 day)	[115]
6-OHDA	AdIL-1 β	[116]
AdIL-1 β	AdIL-1 β	[116]
Paraquat	DSS (250 mg/ml, 5 days)	[117]
α -syn injection	LPS (1–2.5 mg/kg, 1 day)	[118]
Transgenic A53T α -syn model	LPS (1–2.5 mg/kg, 1 day)	[118]
Lactacystin	LPS (0.25 mg/kg, 4 days)	[119]
Transgenic A53T α -syn model	DSS (0.5%, 12 weeks)	[120]
MPTP	DSS (2.5%, 8 days)	[121]
	DSS (2%, 15 days)	[122]
Iv injections of α -syn	LPS (0.8 mg/kg, 4 days)	[123]
Rotenone	Chronic stress-induced intestinal dysfunction	[124]
MPTP	LPS (2 mg/kg, 1 day)	[125]
LPS	Carrageenan	[126]
Rotenone	Carrageenan	[126]
α -syn injection	LPS (0.5 mg/kg, 1 day)	[127]
LPS	DSS (5%, 7 days)	[103]

ger stronger responses and further perpetuate the ongoing neurodegenerative process [111, 112].

Considering all this information, some authors, including our group, have developed several animal models resulting from the combination of peripheral inflammation and central nigral dopaminergic challenge (reviews in [113, 114]). These models have been summarized in Table 1.

The most popular model of peripheral inflammation used in these combined models is the one based on intraperitoneal injection of LPS at doses ranging from 0.4 to 2.5 mg/kg in just one or several consecutive days. Gut inflammation induced by the ulcerative colitis model based on DSS administration (from 0.5 to 5%) in drinking water is the other most common model of peripheral inflammation. Injection of carrageenan into the paws of rats and injections of adenoviral vector that produce human IL-1 β are also useful approaches to achieve peripheral inflammation. These models of peripheral inflammation were combined with a nigral insult induced by several PD models, including the 6-OHDA, MPTP, LPS, rotenone, and paraquat administration models. Inhibition of the proteasome system and injections of α -syn oligomers or transgenic animals that overexpress α -syn are also used as PD models. To note, chronic stress, which is a common condition nowadays, can influence the gut microbiota and alter the complex equilibrium in the intestinal milieu leading to a proinflammatory state that has been shown to accelerate neuronal degeneration and motor deficits in parkinsonism rodent models [124].

All these data reinforce the idea that peripheral inflammation could be a significant risk factor for PD and, therefore, strategies aimed at controlling the systemic inflammatory state arise as potential therapeutic options to control the development of PD. In this sense, Boza-Serrano et al. have shown that modulation of galectin-3, a microglia-related protein recently described as an immunomodulator, plays a significant role in microglia activation induced by α -syn [128]. Indeed, we have demonstrated that this ability of galectin-3 is extensive to emerge as a promising strategy to minimize undesired microglia activation states in PD [129]. The use of anti-inflammatory therapies in PD treatment has also been proposed, although clinical trials do not show significant results [130]. The NLRP3 inflammasome plays a critical role in the pathogenesis of PD, which led some authors to propose liver NLRP3 inhibitors to attenuate systemic inflammation and protect against a model of PD in rodents [131]. Finally, Liu et al. have demonstrated that peripheral immune tolerance mediated by CD200/CD200R signaling can attenuate neuroinflammation and decrease neurodegeneration in the LPS model of PD, suggesting CD200R as a potential therapeutic target to alleviate neuroinflammation in PD [132, 133].

MODELS OF PD BASED ON PERIPHERAL INFLAMMATION

All these studies target systemic inflammation as a possible facilitator of PD. The question is whether

Table 2

Take-home information. All the models described so far share two common features: microglial activation and the death of dopaminergic neurons. This can be achieved by central or peripheral inflammatory challenges while its combination leads to a higher effect

Model	Substance	Main features
Intranigral injection	LPS, Thrombin, tPA	Loss of astrocytes Infiltration of peripheral cells Dose-dependent TH ⁺ cells death Other neuronal phenotypes not affected
Virus-mediated overexpression of proteins	α-Syn PFF	α-Syn aggregation
	GT1b	iNOS upregulation
	Neuromelanin	50% TH ⁺ cells death
	α-Syn	Toxic aggregates of α-syn in microglia but not in dopaminergic neurons
Peripheral challenge	IL-1β	Low but progressive TH ⁺ cells death
	TNF	Mild but chronic microglial activation and TH ⁺ cells death
Infiltration of peripheral cells	LPS, DSS	Progressive TH ⁺ cells death
Intranigral + Peripheral insult	6-OHDA	Higher microglial activation* Higher loss of astrocytes* Higher loss of dopaminergic neurons* *Compared to single insult
	AdIL-1β	
	Paraquat	
	Lactacystin	
	α-syn	
	MPTP	
	Rotenone	

peripheral inflammation is able *per se* and without any other central stimulus to induce a neuroinflammatory environment in the brain that subsequently could induce dopaminergic neurodegeneration. In this sense, two important PD models based on peripheral inflammation are arising: the systemic LPS injection and the gut-brain axis.

Systemic LPS injection

The relevance of systemic inflammation in the integrity of the dopaminergic system was first demonstrated by Qin et al. in 2007 [134] when they administered a single dose of intraperitoneal LPS (5 mg/kg) in adult mice and discovered that the mice suffer from chronic and progressive dopaminergic degeneration at 7 and 10 months after the injection. Interestingly, LPS is not reported to cross the BBB, but authors identified the upregulation of peripheral TNF as the responsible for dopaminergic vulnerability. Indeed, effects of injection include increased microglial activation and reduced TH staining in the first hours post-injection [135]. Notably, the study by Qin et al. stimulated the combination of systemic LPS injection with other parkinsonian models (see Table 1). Later, other studies have observed a more accelerated degeneration with repeated injections of LPS. For instance, Bodea and colleagues [136] proposed that systemic injection of LPS during 4 consecutive days (1 mg/kg per day) led to dopamin-

ergic degeneration 15 days after the last injection, in contrast with the same dose in a single injection that was unable to promote degeneration at that time point. Systemic LPS injection was characterized by an increased initial microglial response with significant cytokine production, particularly TNF and IL-1β; however, this activation returned to basal levels 15 days after the injection. Importantly, systemic LPS can be a valuable model for studying prodromal PD. For instance, systemic LPS models present early α-syn alterations and non-motor symptoms in the gut [137], olfactory impairments, and anxiety-like behavior [138]. Indeed, Song and colleagues [139] demonstrated that systemic LPS promotes sequential degeneration in the brain, resembling the initial phases of the Braak theory [140], starting in the locus coeruleus, followed by the SN, and lastly, the cortex and hippocampus.

An innovative variant of the effect of peripheral LPS on the dopaminergic system is the chronic intranasal administration, which after 5 months of daily administration, promoted microglia activation, moderate (~50%) dopaminergic degeneration, and, remarkably, α-syn aggregation [141]. A similar but shorter model was also used by Li et al. [142], leading to a 38% of TH neuronal loss after 1 month of treatment, increased α-syn expression, and behavioral impairment. The same approach was used by Niu et al. [143], describing a more intense nigral degeneration after 6 weeks of treatment while also

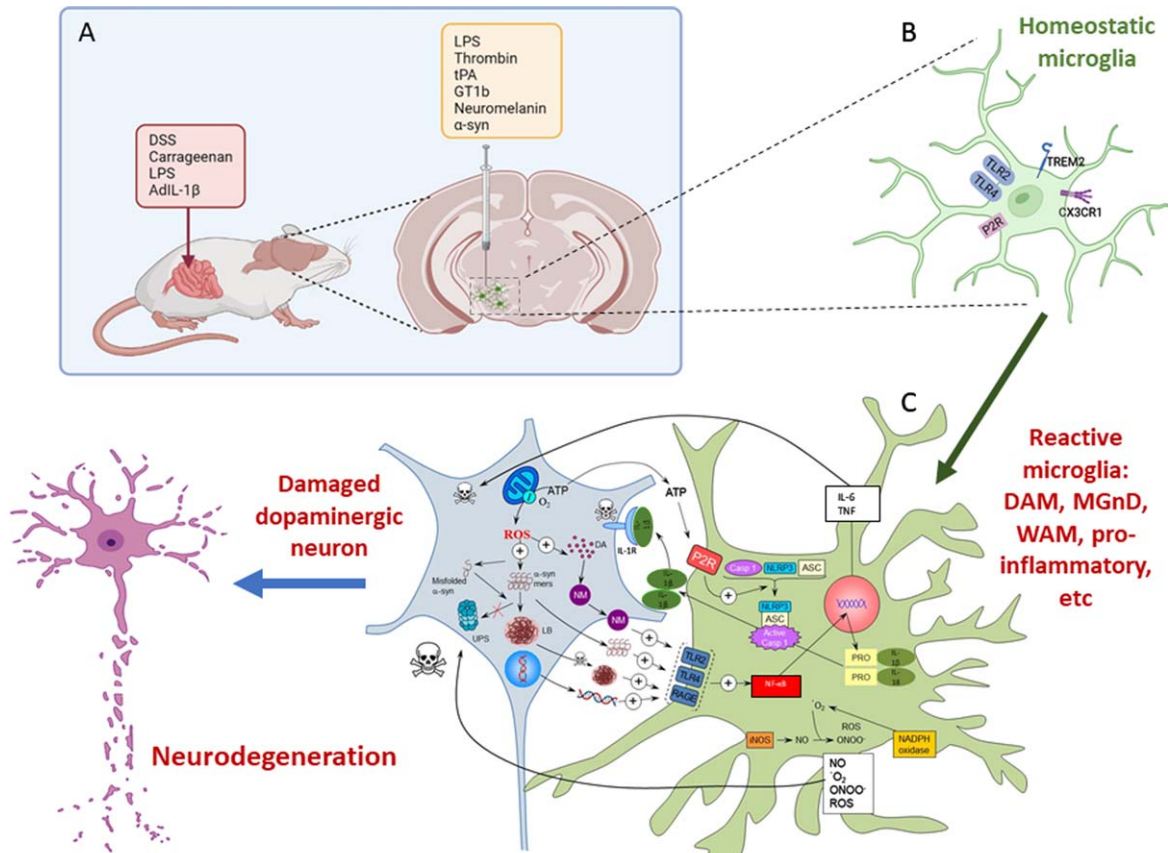


Fig. 1. A) Inflammatory models of Parkinson's disease take advantage of the use of different proinflammatory compounds administered peripherally, intracerebral, or by combining both pathways. B) Whatever compound and route of administration used, homeostatic microglia sense the environment through a set of surface receptors (the pattern recognition receptors, PRRs), including TLR2, TLR4, and RAGE. C) When activated, microglia undergo molecular and morphological changes, becoming reactive microglia. Illustrative examples are the DAM phenotype driven by TREM2 or the proinflammatory phenotype driven by TLR activation. Different microglia phenotypes can coexist under neurodegenerative conditions. Their activation leads to activation of the NF- κ B pathway and the transcription of several proinflammatory genes (TNF and IL-6). Assembly of the NLRP3 inflammasome and activation of caspase-1 produce IL-1 β and IL-18. Reactive microglia are also a source of ROS and RNS. All these products exert a harmful effect on dopaminergic neurons, which in turn release substances such as ATP, neuromelanin, and different forms of α -syn (either monomers or aggregates) that bind microglial PRRs in a vicious cycle that eventually leads to the death of dopaminergic neurons. Modified from Herrera et al., 2018 [169] using BioRender.

777 identifying IL-1 β signaling as a relevant factor in this
778 model.

779 Gut-brain axis

780 Different authors have recently suggested that
781 intestinal inflammation could be a silent driver of PD
782 pathogenesis [144]. The term gut-brain axis has been
783 progressively gaining interest in the last 20 years.
784 This term refers to the bidirectional communication
785 between the CNS and the enteric nervous system and
786 incorporates the fine regulation of immune responses
787 in the gut and brain [144]. It is known that
788 inflammatory processes can enter the CNS through

789 different mechanisms, including the humoral and
790 neuronal pathways (see [113]). Braak and colleagues,
791 based on the appearance of Lewy pathology, already
792 hypothesized the possibility that PD may start in
793 the gastrointestinal tract to spread to the brain via
794 the vagus nerve to further reach the ventral mesen-
795 cephalon [140]. Indeed, experimental evidence has
796 shown that the gastrointestinal tract is a potential
797 starting point for aggregated α -syn, with the vagus
798 nerve acting as a route by which pathology may be
799 transmitted to the lower brainstem [145]. Therefore,
800 a new model for PD pathogenesis has been recently
801 proposed [144]. In this model, the disorder origi-
802 nates in the intestine to further progress to the ventral

mesencephalon in an inflammation-mediated process. Thus, in a susceptible individual, inflammatory triggers, such as bacteria, viruses, or environmental toxins could initiate immune responses in the gut that eventually could deleteriously impact the microbiota, increasing intestinal permeability and inducing increased expression and aggregation of α -syn. Aberrant conformations of α -syn may be transmitted from the gut to the brain via the vagus nerve, while chronic intestinal inflammation promotes systemic inflammation. As mentioned before, this peripheral inflammation can increase BBB permeability, allowing the entrance of cytokines and immune blood cells to the brain parenchyma. Combination of intestinal inflammation, systemic inflammation and α -syn pathology in the brain promote neuroinflammation, which eventually drives the neurodegeneration process that characterizes PD. This model is sustained by epidemiological data showing that patients with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) have a higher risk of developing PD than non-IBD individuals [146]. Moreover, gene association studies have found a genetic link between PD and IBD [147]. Therefore, it would be interesting to look for parkinsonian signs in animals using models to mimic IBD pathology. In this context, Labandeira-García's group showed that a subchronic regimen of 2.5% of DSS for three weeks results in early changes in the nigrostriatal dopaminergic homeostasis, dopaminergic neuronal death, and increased levels of nigral proinflammatory mediators [148]. These are intriguing data that deserve further investigation since, if confirmed, this model would greatly contribute to understanding the underlying mechanisms involved in PD.

Anti-inflammatory interventions

All this information has encouraged some authors to deepen their understanding of the effects of peripheral inflammation on neuroinflammation. These studies have revealed that peripheral inflammation, especially gut inflammation, induces neuroinflammation in certain brain structures that is accompanied by several manifestations such as anxiety, depression, chronic pain and memory and cognitive impairments [149, 150]. However, this neuroinflammation and its associated symptoms decrease with some anti-inflammatory interventions in animal models. These treatments include inhibitors of the S-100 protein, TNF inhibitors, and neutrophil depletion [151, 152]. Melatonin, fermented rice bran, and DHA/EPA₂₀₀ treatments also improve the symptoms associated to

peripheral inflammation-related neuroinflammation [153–155]. In this regard, our group has recently published a study on the peripheral and central anti-inflammatory effects of galectin-3 inhibitors in DSS-induced gut inflammation [129].

There is, therefore, increasing interest in testing these anti-inflammatory treatments in humans, which is why several clinical trials are running (CN-02323358). Considering that intestinal inflammation appears to be the most powerful driver of neuroinflammation, most of these trials focus on the reduction of gut inflammation, modifying the microbiota through probiotics and prebiotics (CN-02355534; NCT04512599; NCT05146921; NCT04032262, NCT05173701, NCT04159727). However, to date, only one trial has been completed [156]. In this study, the authors evaluate the effects of probiotic supplementation on inflammation-related gene expression in PD patients, finding an overall significant improvement on several inflammatory-related genes such as IL-1, IL-8, TNF- α and TGF- β . Further studies need to be completed to gain a better understanding of whether interruption in inflammatory signaling ameliorates inflammation and subsequent neurodegeneration.

Viral parkinsonism models

A viral onset has been long proposed for PD since 1918 influenza led to some encephalitis cases that mimicked some parkinsonism symptoms [157]. It remains however unclear if there is a real implication of viral infections on PD onset [158]. However, viral infection can lead to systemic hyperinflammation known as “cytokine storm” that can penetrate in the brain and promote a potent inflammatory response, oxidative stress and upregulation of α -syn [159, 160]. In Sadasivan et al. [161], authors examined the effect of H1N1 influenza virus in an MPTP model of PD. The authors observed an increased loss of dopaminergic neurons but they failed to attribute it to increased microglia activation, what suggests an implication of peripheral immune system, but also the direct action of the virus in the dopaminergic neurons [162]. However, the best described virus used to induce PD in animal models has been Japanese encephalitis virus [163]. In this model, strong microglia reactivity has been observed through TLRs activation while also compromising dopaminergic system integrity [164]. Similarly, alphaviruses have also been described as an alternative parkinsonism model [165].

The new pandemic caused by coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 has gained a lot of attention from a PD research perspective. Despite the relation of COVID-19 with PD, this is yet not clear as the neurological effects of COVID-19 are still arising [166]. It has been reported that PD patients could develop prolonged post-COVID19 syndrome with worsen motor behavior and poor levodopa response [167]. Several COVID-19 features could lead to worsening PD symptoms; in particular, those related with cytokine storm that increase serum levels of distinct cytokines and neurotoxic components that have been previously related with PD [168]. No model for the impact of SARS-CoV-2 in PD, or vice versa, has been proposed. However, health care systems overload, pandemic-derived psychological stress and lockdown restrictions have had a major (but variable) impact on PD patients' status that should be carefully addressed before analyzing any physiological effect of COVID-19 on PD etiology.

CONCLUSIONS

This plethora of immune models may help to understand the complex molecular mechanisms associated with PD like the contribution of central and peripheral immune cells in key events of the disease. Among them, we may cite the role in the aggregation and spreading of α -syn and identification of microglia subtypes and their contribution in the disease. Elucidation of signaling pathways behind these events may be critical for identification of preclinical drugs potentially relevant for PD.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have no conflict of interest to report.

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