

The role of neuroinflammation in Alzheimers disease progression

Simham Sudhakar^{*1}, Dr.M.Madhu², U.Narasimhulu², Dr.K.Adinarayana³

^{*1}*Associate Professor, Department of Pharmacology, Annamacharya College of Pharmacy, Andhra Pradesh, India*

²*Associate Professor, Department of Pharmaceutical analysis, Annamacharya College of Pharmacy, Andhra Pradesh, India*

³*Professor, Department of Pharmaceutical biotechnology, Annamacharya College of Pharmacy, Andhra Pradesh, India*

Abstract— Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a progressive neurological disorder characterized by deficits in memory, cognition, behavior, and personality. Neuroinflammation significantly affects AD progression, with immune cells such as microglia and astrocytes playing crucial roles. Activated microglia release inflammatory molecules that can potentially initiate chronic inflammation. Astrocyte activation varies by brain region and disease stage and sometimes precedes microglial activation. Inflammatory proteins, including interleukins and tumor necrosis factor- α , promote inflammatory pathways and, with other molecules, induce neuronal death. The activation of the complement system in AD can contribute to and mitigate disease progression. The key features of AD include amyloid-beta accumulation, plaque formation, excessive tau protein phosphorylation, neurofibrillary tangle development, and synaptic impairment and loss, all of which are influenced by neuroinflammation. Initial neuroinflammation may be protective; however, prolonged inflammation exacerbates the disease. Potential therapies include anti-inflammatory drugs, immune system modulation, and treatments targeting microglia and astrocytes. Studying neuroinflammation in AD is challenging because of the complex immune response of the brain, limitations of animal models, and difficulties in translating the findings to humans. Emerging research on novel biomarkers, personalized medicine, and combination therapies targeting multiple aspects of neuroinflammation may lead to more effective prevention and treatment strategies for AD.

Keywords—Alzheimer's disease, Neuroinflammation, Microglia, Astrocytes, Neurodegeneration, Cytokines, Amyloid-beta

I. INTRODUCTION

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder characterized by deterioration of memory, cognitive function, and

alterations in behavior and personality [1]. It is the primary etiology of dementia in older adults. AD prevalence varies across geographical regions and demographic groups. In Europe, the overall prevalence rate is estimated to be 5.05%, with a higher incidence in females (7.13%) than in males (3.31%) [2]. The risk of developing AD increases significantly with age, and it is projected that the number of individuals aged ≥ 85 years affected by the disease will quadruple to 8.0 million by 2050 [3]. Moreover, approximately 31% of AD patients exhibit psychotic manifestations such as hallucinations and delusions, which can emerge even in the early stages of the illness [4]. Neuroinflammation significantly affects the progression of Alzheimer's disease (AD). Innate immune cells, particularly microglia and astrocytes, mediate neuroinflammation in AD, thus contributing to its pathogenesis [5]. A key feature of AD is microglial activation, which results in the release of proinflammatory cytokines. This process can potentially create a self-perpetuating cycle between neurons and microglia, leading to persistent low-level inflammation [6]. Chronic elevation of proinflammatory cytokines has been hypothesized to promote neurodegeneration. Certain inflammatory mediators, such as neuronal pentraxins, have demonstrated both neuroprotective and potentially detrimental effects in AD [7]. The JAK/STAT signaling pathway plays a crucial role in promoting neuroinflammation by triggering innate immunity, coordinating adaptive immune responses, and regulating neuroinflammatory processes [8]. Furthermore, extracellular vesicles (EVs) are important mediators of the immune system and are capable of activating molecular pathways that exacerbate neuroinflammatory processes in AD [9]. The objective of this review in Alzheimer's disease

progression is to provide a comprehensive overview of the existing research on monitoring changes over time using cognitive test batteries. It aims to analyze longitudinal investigations that track patients likely to have Alzheimer's, as diagnosed by established criteria, and employ validated assessment methods to evaluate disease progression.

II. ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

2.1. Overview of Alzheimer's disease Pathology
Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a complex pathology involving interactions between various protein aggregates and vascular changes. It is characterized by progressive neuropathological alterations, mainly the accumulation of β -amyloid (senile plaques) and tau aggregates (neurofibrillary tangles) in the brain. These indicators are crucial for AD diagnosis and are accompanied by synaptic deterioration and vascular amyloid deposits [10]. AD progression is closely associated with the neuropathological changes that lead to brain dysfunction [11]. Rather than being a single disorder, AD comprises of a spectrum of conditions with diverse pathobiological subtypes. These subtypes exhibit distinct tau pathological patterns, clinical manifestations, age and sex distributions, biomarker levels, and network disruptions that cause cognitive decline. Additionally, AD often coexists with age-related co-pathologies such as cerebrovascular lesions, Lewy bodies, and TDP-43 pathology, influencing clinical presentation and accelerating disease progression.

2.2. Key players in neuroinflammation

Neuroinflammation is crucial for the progression of Alzheimer's disease (AD) and involves numerous essential components. Microglia, which are the immune cells of the brain, are pivotal in AD-related neuroinflammation [12]. They are activated in response to amyloid- β (A β) accumulation and other AD pathologies, releasing proinflammatory cytokines and potentially creating a self-perpetuating cycle in neurons, leading to chronic low-grade inflammation. The gut microbiome significantly modulates AD-related neuroinflammation. Dysbiosis, or alterations in gut microbiota, disrupts key AD mechanisms, including blood-brain barrier integrity and neurotransmitter regulation [13]. This gut-brain connection provides new insights into AD pathogenesis and therapeutic strategies. Interactions between microglia, the gut microbiota, and inflammatory mediators such as interleukins, tumor

necrosis factor-alpha, and inflammasomes contribute to AD's complex neuroinflammatory process in AD [14]. Recent studies have highlighted the role of eicosanoids and polyunsaturated fatty acid metabolites in AD progression through their effects on brain and immune responses [15]. Understanding these factors and their interactions is vital for the development of targeted therapies and innovative approaches to mitigate AD progression.

2.3. The link between neuroinflammation and Alzheimer's

Recent research has highlighted the critical role of neuroinflammation in the disease (AD) etiology and progression of AD. Traditionally viewed as a proteopathy with amyloid- β plaques and neurofibrillary tangles [16], recent studies have emphasized the impact of persistent neuroinflammation on AD onset and progression. The association between neuroinflammation and AD has gained attention, demonstrating its effects on key brain functions, including adult neurogenesis [17]. This has led to the development of therapeutic strategies targeting the activation of the chronic immune system. The relationship between neuroinflammation and AD is bidirectional, as AD pathology induces inflammatory responses and neuroinflammation exacerbates AD progression [18]. Recent investigations have revealed complex interactions between neuroinflammation, the immune system, and AD pathology, focusing on microglia and the brain's primary immune cells. Additionally, studies have explored the systemic inflammation, gut microbiome dysbiosis, and blood-brain barrier dysfunction that contribute to AD-related neuroinflammation [19]. These insights provide a comprehensive view of AD as involving both central and peripheral inflammatory processes, paving the way for new therapies and emphasizing early intervention's importance [20].

III. MECHANISMS OF NEUROINFLAMMATION IN ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

3.1. Microglial activation and its effects

Microglial activation in Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a complex process. Initially, microglia may be protected by clearing amyloid-beta (A β) plaques, with Ccr2-dependent microglial accumulation enhancing A β clearance and slowing disease progression in mice [21]. However, prolonged activation produces excessive proinflammatory

cytokines such as interleukin-1 and tumor necrosis factor- α , leading to neuroinflammation and neurodegeneration [22]. Although some studies have shown that microglial activation worsens AD pathology, others have highlighted the importance of microglial activation in brain health. TREM2, a microglial gene, is crucial for A β -plaque pathology [23]. The shift from an anti-inflammatory M2 phenotype to a proinflammatory M1 phenotype is key to AD progression [24]. Future therapies may focus on modulating microglial activation, targeting pathways such as TREM2, or using flavonoids to promote the M2 phenotype [24].

3.2. Astrocyte reactivity

Astrocyte reactivity is pivotal in Alzheimer's disease (AD) development. As AD advances, astrocytes become structurally and functionally reactive to stimuli such as amyloid-beta (A β) accumulation [25]. This reaction can be both beneficial and harmful depending on the disease stage [26]. Reactivity patterns differ across brain regions and disease phases. Single-nucleus RNA sequencing has shown that astrocyte genes associated with tripartite synapses are dysregulated during the progression of tangle pathology [27]. In presenilin 1/2 conditional knockout mice, astrocyte activation preceded microglial activation in the somatosensory cortex, indicating the involvement of early astrocytes in neurodegeneration [28]. Astrocyte reactivity in AD involves complex molecular pathways and epigenetic mechanisms [29]. Understanding the roles and diversity of reactive astrocytes may reveal new therapeutic targets in AD.

3.3. Proinflammatory cytokines and their roles

Proinflammatory cytokines are crucial in the development of Alzheimer's disease (AD) and contribute to neuroinflammation and neurodegeneration. Specific interleukins (ILs) such as IL-1, IL-6, and IL-8, activate inflammatory pathways, while tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF α) can induce neurodegeneration alongside other proinflammatory cytokines [30]. Excessive production of these molecules exacerbates neurotoxicity and AD pathology [31]. Certain cytokines have mixed effects; for example, interferons (IFNs) show neuroprotective properties in some studies but promote neurotoxicity in others by inducing proinflammatory cytokines. Neuronal pentraxins display both protective and harmful effects in AD. The secretion of proinflammatory

cytokines promotes neuroinflammation and neuronal damage, highlighting the need for a balanced understanding of neuroinflammation in AD [32].

3.4. Complement system activation

The complement system plays a multifaceted role in the progression of Alzheimer's disease (AD), with both protective and harmful effects. Complement proteins are linked to amyloid plaques and neurofibrillary tangles in AD brains, indicating their involvement in disease pathology [33]. Activation of the complement system can trigger neuroinflammation, microglial activation, and proinflammatory cytokine release, potentially worsening neurodegeneration [34]. While contributing to neuroinflammation and synaptic loss, the complement system may also help eliminate aggregated and toxic proteins, thus offering a protective effect [35]. The balance between these functions is crucial for disease progression. Moreover, the complement system interacts with other risk factors such as TREM2 and ApoE4, influencing neurodegeneration in both amyloid and tau models of AD [36]. Understanding this balance is vital for developing targeted therapies. Inhibiting specific components, such as the C5a receptor, has shown efficacy in reducing pathological markers and enhancing cognitive function in rodent models of AD [37]. Additionally, natural compounds and complement-targeted therapies are emerging as potential strategies for modulating their effects on the central nervous system in AD.

IV. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEUROINFLAMMATION AND ALZHEIMER'S HALLMARKS

4.1. Amyloid-beta accumulation and plaques

Amyloid-beta (A β) accumulation and plaque formation are central to Alzheimer's disease (AD) progression. The amyloid hypothesis suggests that amyloid precursor protein (APP) cleavage to produce A β peptides is crucial for AD pathogenesis [38]. A β buildup begins years before cognitive symptoms begin, moving from intracellular to extracellular plaques, causing synaptic loss, energy metabolism impairment, and disruptions in protein and metal homeostasis [39]. However, studies on APP expression in AD are contradictory; some indicate that increased APP expression contributes to the disease, while others report reduced APP expression in AD-affected brains. Research shows that neuronal

APP expression increases with age in non-demented individuals, but decreases in AD patients as A β plaques mature [40]. This decline in APP levels may decrease neuronal resilience to stress and exacerbate the disease progression. A β accumulation and plaque formation significantly influence AD pathology and therapeutic strategies.

4.2. Tau hyperphosphorylation and neurofibrillary tangles

Excessive tau phosphorylation and neurofibrillary tangles (NFTs) are critical for Alzheimer's disease progression. Tau proteins, which are essential for neuronal microtubule structure, can undergo hyperphosphorylation, leading to NFT development, which is a hallmark of AD. This hyperphosphorylation reduces the microtubule-binding ability of tau, destabilizes the cytoskeleton, and potentially forms paired helical filaments that constitute NFTs [41]. However, tau hyperphosphorylation and NFT formation do not always correlate. Some intracellular tangles contain intact tau proteins that do not react with phosphorylation-specific antibodies, indicating that hyperphosphorylation may not be necessary for the development of NFT in AD. Additionally, research has linked tau hyperphosphorylation with glucose metabolism irregularities, suggesting a connection through hypothermia [42]. The interplay between tau pathology, oxidative stress, and impaired autophagy drives AD progression [43]. Understanding these processes is crucial for developing effective AD treatment and early detection methods.

4.3. Synaptic dysfunction and loss

Early Alzheimer's disease (AD) involves synaptic dysfunction and loss preceding significant neuronal death and is closely linked to cognitive decline. These synaptic changes are the primary cause of cognitive impairment in AD, with synaptic loss being the most reliable predictor of cognitive deterioration [44]. Amyloid-beta (A β) peptides and hyperphosphorylated tau proteins substantially contribute to these alterations, leading to memory impairment, cognitive decline, and disorientation [45]. Dysfunction in the locus coeruleus-noradrenaline system also plays a crucial role in AD progression, as reduced noradrenaline levels increase neuroinflammation, amyloid, and tau accumulation, and impair cognition and synaptic plasticity [46]. Additionally, extracellular vesicles from brain cells may mediate early synaptic changes

in AD [47]. The anaphase-promoting complex/cyclosome-Cdh1 complex is implicated in synaptic plasticity and neuronal survival, and its inactivation causes dendrite disruption, synapse loss, and neurodegeneration [48]. Understanding the complex factors that contribute to synaptic dysfunction, such as oxidative stress, neuroinflammation, and impaired energy metabolism, could provide insights into the development of effective disease-modifying treatments for AD.

V. NEUROINFLAMMATION IN ALZHEIMER'S PROGRESSION

5.1. Early stages and potential protective roles

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a progressive neurodegenerative disorder characterized by cognitive decline, first evident as amnesic mild cognitive impairment (MCI) [49]. Early detection and intervention of AD are vital for mitigating its progression and potentially delaying its onset. In AD's early stages of AD, including MCI, various neuroimaging and cognitive markers are detectable, with alterations in the brain structure and function observed in both cognitively normal older adults and those with MCI, suggesting potential early detection biomarkers. Declines in working memory and executive function during MCI may signal a transition to AD [50]. Thalamic volume reduction is an early MCI indicator, whereas hippocampal and temporal region atrophy becomes more pronounced later [51]. Protective measures and interventions can slow AD progression, with exercise and physical activity programs targeting modifiable risk factors showing potential in maintaining brain health and preventing dementia [52]. Cognitive therapy during MCI, when neuroplasticity is present, may reduce the likelihood of AD progression. Additionally, certain herbs with neuroprotective, antioxidant, and anticholinesterase properties have shown promise for in the treatment of AD [53].

5.2. Chronic inflammation and disease exacerbation

Progression of Alzheimer's disease (AD) and cognitive decline are significantly affected by persistent inflammation. Systemic inflammatory signals can reach the brain and alter central nervous system (CNS) functioning, often resulting in sickness behavior syndrome. These changes are driven by cytokine and prostaglandin production in both the systemic circulation and CNS, potentially leading to delirium in patients with dementia, exacerbating

cognitive dysfunction and resulting in poor outcomes [54]. Both acute and chronic systemic inflammation are linked to elevated levels of proinflammatory cytokines, particularly tumor necrosis factor α (TNF- α), which is crucial for immune-brain communication. Research has shown that acute systemic inflammation can double the rate of cognitive decline over six months in patients with AD, while high initial TNF- α level can quadruple this rate [55]. This finding highlights the significant effect of inflammation on disease progression. Future studies should aim to develop targeted strategies to manage chronic infections and inflammation, possibly using antibacterial or anti-inflammatory agents to slow disease progression [56].

5.3. Late-stage neuroinflammation and cognitive decline

Neuroinflammation significantly influences Alzheimer's disease (AD) progression, particularly in later stages. Some studies have proposed neuroinflammation as an initial neurodegeneration trigger [57], whereas others have found that elevated inflammatory markers at baseline do not predict faster cognitive decline in mild cognitive impairment or AD dementia [58]. These findings suggest a complex relationship between neuroinflammation and cognitive decline. PET imaging studies have shown that neuroinflammatory biomarkers, along with amyloid and tau markers, predict longitudinal cognitive decline in patients with AD and MCI [59]. Conversely, a post-mortem study linked systemic infections in late-stage AD to reduced inflammatory marker expression and increased anti-inflammatory gene expression, indicating a potential immunosuppressive environment [60].

VI. POTENTIAL THERAPEUTIC TARGETS AND STRATEGIES

6.1. Anti-inflammatory drugs

Research has indicated that anti-inflammatory medications may slow the progression of Alzheimer's disease (AD). Current AD treatments only alleviate symptoms without slowing down the disease, emphasizing the need for new therapies [61]. The connection between the various theories of AD pathogenesis and neuroinflammation makes it a promising therapeutic target. Studies have suggested that anti-inflammatory drugs can delay AD onset and progression. Observational studies have linked NSAIDs to a reduced AD risk, but clinical trials have

shown mixed results, with some indicating no benefits or adverse effects from long-term NSAID use [62]. The effectiveness of anti-inflammatory drugs in AD may depend on their target immune cells. Recruiting systemic immune cells, such as CD4+ T cells and monocytes, into the CNS may be necessary to manage harmful local inflammation [63]. This implies that systemic anti-inflammatory therapies might fail to halt neurodegeneration due to the suppression of recruitment.

6.2. Immunomodulation approaches

Innovative immune modulation approaches have shown efficacy in slowing the progression of Alzheimer's disease (AD) by targeting amyloid- β (A β) accumulation, tau pathology, and neuroinflammation. Immunotherapy, especially targeting A β , has the potential to alter the course of AD by using synthetic peptides or antibodies to reduce brain A β and slow disease progression [64]. Passive immunotherapy reduces large aggregates and improves cognitive function [65]. However, translating these successes into human treatments has been challenging, possibly because of the imprecise targeting. Previous studies have suggested that a combination of immunotherapies may be more effective. A vaccine targeting both A β and phosphorylated tau (pTau) epitopes showed promising results in 3xTg transgenic mice, eliciting strong antibody responses and significantly reducing A β plaques and tau tangles, improving cognitive function, and suppressing neuroinflammation more effectively than single-target vaccines [66]. Additionally, addressing neuroinflammation through LC3-associated endocytosis (LANDO) has the potential to reduce AD pathology and tau phosphorylation [67].

6.3. Microglial and astrocyte-targeted therapies

Recent studies have emphasized therapies that target microglia and astrocytes to slow their progression. Glial cells are crucial for neuroinflammation, which is a key factor in AD pathology. Research suggests that Ccr2-dependent microglial accumulation may protect against early AD stages by enhancing amyloid-beta (A β) clearance [68]. Additionally, NLY01, an engineered exendin-4 GLP-1R agonist, targets the glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor (GLP-1R) on microglia and effectively inhibits A β -induced microglial activation and reactive astrocyte formation [69]. However, microglia-targeted therapies can have various effects.

Modulation of inflammatory pathways often leads to different effects on tau and amyloid pathology, depending on the astrocyte phenotype and functions in various contexts [70]. This complexity highlights the need for a refined approach to the development of glial cell-targeted therapies.

VII. CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

7.1. Complexity of the immune response in the brain
Alzheimer's disease (AD) involves a complex brain, immune response that engages both innate and adaptive systems. Neuroinflammation, marked by activated microglia and astrocytes, is crucial to AD pathogenesis and can be triggered by brain-specific insults or external factors, such as gut microbiome dysbiosis [71]. The immune response in AD varies according to pathological manifestations. Distinct immune activation patterns occur in the brains with "pure" beta-amyloid and tau pathology compared to those with Lewy body pathology, highlighting the disease-specific nature of neuroimmune interactions [72]. The evolving and region-specific immune landscape in AD complicates the development of targeted therapies [73].

7.2. Limitations of current animal models

The immune response in Alzheimer's disease (AD) progression involves both the innate and adaptive systems. Neuroinflammation, driven by microglial and astrocyte activation, plays a key role in AD pathogenesis and which is marked by the release of proinflammatory cytokines and neurotoxic factors that contribute to neurodegeneration [74]. The AD immune response also involves gut-brain crosstalk; gut microbiota dysbiosis can trigger brain inflammation, worsening AD by recruiting immune cells to the brain. Various molecular pathways and signaling molecules further complicate the immune response in AD. Type-I interferons regulate the innate immune response and contribute to AD progression [75]. MicroRNA-155 is crucial in neuroinflammation, influencing proinflammatory cytokine expression and blood-brain barrier integrity [76]. The interaction between tau pathology and immune responses adds further complexity to AD neuroinflammation [77].

7.3. Difficulties in translating findings to human patients

Despite significant research advancements, translating animal study findings to human

Alzheimer's disease (AD) patients remains challenging. The failure to convert rodent data into effective treatments has raised doubts about the validity of the current models [78]. This challenge arises from AD's complexity of AD and the limitations of animal models in replicating the full course of the disease in humans. Animal models cannot accurately represent the entire spectrum of AD pathology and progression, often leading to promising results that do not translate into clinical trials. Researchers are exploring innovative approaches to identifying new biological targets during disease progression [79]. The focus was on developing models that better mimicked human AD pathology. Incorporating new elements such as innovative biomarkers, novel neuropsychological outcomes, and recruiting earlier populations in clinical trials may help bridge the gap between animal research and human applications [80].

VIII. EMERGING RESEARCH AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

8.1. Novel biomarkers for neuroinflammation

Neuroinflammation is a key factor in the progression of Alzheimer's disease (AD), and has led to the development of novel biomarkers for early diagnosis and monitoring. Inflammatory mediators and glial proteins from microglial cells and astrocytes are promising biomarkers for AD-related neuroinflammation [81]. Advances in imaging and fluid biomarker technologies have identified surrogate markers of neuroinflammation in living individuals, thereby improving understanding of AD pathogenesis. Brain-periphery communication allows blood to reflect AD-related pathological changes, making it a valuable biomarker source [82]. Emerging techniques have identified biomarkers for various aspects of AD, including A β oligomers, tau proteins in the plasma and cerebrospinal fluid (CSF), and markers of synaptic dysfunction, neuronal damage, neuroinflammation, blood-brain barrier dysfunction, oxidative stress, and metabolic changes. Minimally invasive fluids such as saliva, urine, and ocular fluid are also being studied for early AD diagnosis and monitoring [83]. These advancements in biomarker research may improve AD diagnosis, prognosis, and therapeutic monitoring, potentially leading to more effective treatment.

8.2. Personalized medicine approaches

Personalized medicine in Alzheimer's disease (AD)

addresses the complexity of the disease by tailoring treatments to individual genetic, environmental, and lifestyle factors, enhancing efficacy, and minimizing adverse effects [84]. Integrating fluid biomarkers, genetic markers, and neuroimaging is essential for early diagnosis, monitoring disease progression, and evaluating treatment responses [85]. Although personalized medicine has advanced significantly in cancer treatment, its application to AD is still under development. However, progress in pharmacogenomics, targeted neurological approaches, and single nucleotide polymorphism detection has improved the diagnosis and treatment of AD [86]. Additionally, sex-related differences in AD suggest that sex may be significant in patient stratification and personalized treatment strategies [87].

8.3. Combination therapies targeting multiple aspects of neuroinflammation

Combination therapies targeting multiple aspects of neuroinflammation in Alzheimer's disease (AD) progression have shown promise. Recent studies have highlighted the efficacy of multi-target directed ligands (MTDLs) and combinational vaccines in addressing AD pathology [88]. A dual AD vaccine combining A β and pTau epitopes significantly reduces AD pathology in transgenic mouse models. This approach elicited strong antibody responses against pathological A β and pTau, effectively eradicating A β plaques and tau tangles, thus improving cognitive abilities more than individual vaccines. Additionally, the combined vaccine suppressed neuroinflammatory factors such as glass and proinflammatory cytokines, targeting multiple aspects of AD pathology. The development of MTDLs with pharmacophores that inhibit cathepsin B (CatB), dual specificity phosphatase 2 (DUSP2), and monoglycerol lipase (MAGL) is a promising strategy for reducing AD-associated neuroinflammation [89]. These targets have shown promising preclinical anti-inflammatory effects in vivo and in vitro, indicating their potential in addressing neuroinflammation in neurodegenerative diseases.

IX. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, elucidating the mechanisms of neuroinflammation in Alzheimer's disease (AD) is crucial for the development of novel preventive and therapeutic strategies. Targeting specific components

of the inflammatory cascade, such as the NLRP3 inflammasome, shows promise in decelerating A β plaque formation and improving neurological function. Moreover, investigating alternative non-pharmacological interventions, such as microcurrent therapy, which has demonstrated potential in mitigating memory loss and reducing neuronal damage in animal models, may present new avenues for treatment. The impact of neuroinflammatory research on AD management and prevention is significant, potentially facilitating the development of more efficacious interventions that address underlying inflammatory processes and improve patient outcomes.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest related to this study.

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