

Controlling cell death prevents skin inflammation

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The outer layer of the skin, called the epidermis, forms a critical physical and immunological wall that serves as the body's first line of defense against potentially harmful microorganisms. Most of the epidermis consists of cells called keratinocytes that build a mechanical barrier but also perform immune functions. Now, a new study published by Cell Press in the October issue of the journal *Immunity* provides evidence that stopping of a type of regulated cell death called "necroptosis" in keratinocytes is critical for the prevention of skin inflammation.

The Fas Associated [Death Domain](#) (FADD) protein interacts with "death receptors" to activate a well-known programmed cell death pathway called apoptosis. Death receptors have also been shown to induce necroptosis, which is a different type of cell death and is mediated by the proteins RIP1 and RIP3. "Previous studies have suggested that prevention of RIP-mediated necroptosis is essential for [embryonic development](#)," says senior study author, Dr. Manolis Pasparakis, from the University of Cologne. "However, the physiological significance of the mechanisms regulating necroptosis for normal tissue function and [disease pathogenesis](#) remains unclear."

Dr. Pasparakis and colleagues discovered that mice with epidermis-specific ablation of FADD showed spontaneous necroptosis of keratinocytes and developed severe inflammatory [skin lesions](#) within a few days of birth. Further, RIP3-dependent necrotic death of FADD-deficient keratinocytes was identified as the initiating event triggering

[skin inflammation](#). "In contrast to the well-established role as a mediator of apoptosis, we discovered that FADD performs an essential pro-survival function in keratinocytes that is crucial for the maintenance of a balanced skin immune response and the prevention of skin inflammation," reports Dr. Pasparakis.

Taken together, the findings reveal a previously unrecognized physiological role for FADD in preventing necroptosis of epidermal keratinocytes and identify sensitization of keratinocytes to RIP3-mediated cell death as a potent mechanism triggering skin inflammation. Further, these results suggest that genetic or external factors sensitizing keratinocytes necroptosis could be implicated in the pathogenesis of skin inflammation, a feature of many chronic or acute skin conditions such as eczema, psoriasis, and drug rashes. "Our findings provide a first experimental paradigm that regulation of necroptosis is important for the maintenance of immune homeostasis and the prevention of inflammation in the skin," concludes Dr Pasparakis.

Provided by Cell Press

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