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Afr. J. Biomed. Res. Vol. 29(1s) (January 2026); 30-32

Research Article

Chronic Inflammation as a Central Mechanism in the Pathogenesis of Major Diseases: Current Insights and Future Directions

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Abstract

Background: Chronic inflammation contributes to the development and progression of a wide spectrum of diseases including cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders, autoimmune conditions, cancer, and neurodegenerative pathologies. A comprehensive understanding of molecular mechanisms, shared biomarkers, and therapeutic targets is crucial for advancing clinical practice and prevention strategies.

Methods: We conducted a narrative review of peer-reviewed English-language literature published up to 2025, focusing on chronic inflammation's role in disease pathophysiology, overlapping biomarkers, mechanistic pathways, lifestyle and environmental modulators, and evolving therapeutic strategies. Key sources were identified through PubMed, PMC, and related biomedical repositories.

Results: Chronic inflammation is characterized by persistent immune activation and dysregulated resolution processes, driven by molecular mediators such as TNF- α , IL-6, and CRP across multiple diseases. Shared mechanistic pathways include activation of NF- κ B and inflammasome platforms, metabolic reprogramming of immune cells, and altered

cytokine profiles. Lifestyle factors (e.g., diet, physical inactivity, smoking) and environmental exposures contribute to systemic chronic inflammatory states. Novel therapeutic strategies targeting pro-inflammatory mediators, precision modulation of immune signaling, and enhancement of resolution pathways are emerging as promising avenues.

Conclusion: Chronic inflammation acts as a unifying pathophysiologic thread across diverse disease entities. Recognition of shared and tissue-specific mechanisms supports the development of multidisciplinary interventions and precision medicine approaches. Continued research into pro-resolving mediators and immunometabolic regulation is required to translate mechanistic insights into improved clinical outcomes.

Keywords: chronic inflammation; biomarkers; immune modulation; pathophysiology; therapeutic targets

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Acceptance- 05/02/2026 Received - 03/2/2026

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53555/AJBR.v29i1S.9185>

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Introduction

Chronic inflammation is a prolonged immune response that fails to resolve and contributes to tissue damage and disease progression. Unlike acute inflammation, which is self-limiting, chronic inflammation may persist for months or years, driven by complex interactions between immune cells, cytokines, and environmental factors.

Pathophysiologic Mechanisms

Immune Mediators and Signaling Pathways

Pro-inflammatory cytokines such as tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF- α), interleukin (IL)-1 β , and IL-6 play central roles in sustaining chronic inflammatory responses. Activation of key signaling cascades including NF- κ B and the inflammasome promotes a persistent state of immune activation across multiple tissues.

Dysregulation of Resolution

Mechanisms responsible for terminating inflammation (e.g., pro-resolving lipid mediators) become impaired in chronic disease states, leading to persistent tissue injury and fibrosis. Failure of resolution processes contributes to the chronicity of diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, colitis, and asthma.

Shared Biomarkers Across Diseases

Common biomarkers—C-reactive protein (CRP), ESR, and specific cytokine profiles—provide valuable information on inflammatory status and disease activity, and are increasingly used in clinical monitoring and research settings.

Environmental and Lifestyle Modulators

Social, environmental and lifestyle factors — including poor diet, smoking, physical inactivity, and psychological stress — are known contributors to

systemic chronic inflammation and represent modifiable risk factors in disease prevention.

Therapeutic Targets and Emerging Interventions

Advances in immunomodulation include biologics targeting cytokines (e.g., anti-TNF agents), modulation of immune cell metabolism, and lifestyle interventions that reduce systemic inflammation. Precision medicine strategies that incorporate patient-specific inflammatory profiles hold promise for tailored therapies.

Conclusion

Chronic inflammation is a pivotal mechanism underlying many leading causes of morbidity and mortality worldwide. An integrated understanding of molecular drivers, shared biomarkers, and modifiable environmental factors can inform improved prevention, diagnosis, and individualized treatment paradigms.

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