

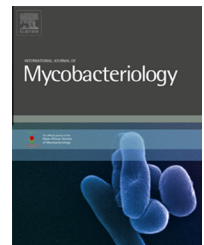
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An update on mycobacteria and the development of allergic diseases

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ABSTRACT

Mycobacteria can diminish allergic and asthmatic manifestations. This means that mycobacteria could offer therapeutical opportunities as an 'anti-allergic' vaccine.

In humans, the genetic background and the environment probably contribute to the development of allergies. Over the last 20 years, a popular explanation for the increase in allergies is the 'hygiene hypothesis'. This hypothesis argues that there might be a misbalance in T-helper-type responses or a misbalance in regulatory immune responses due to less microbial stimulation. It is clear that the hygiene hypothesis should involve the genetic and the environmental background of the individual. Up until now, no specific infectious factor has been found that could explain the hygiene hypothesis. However, interesting data have been obtained in animal models that could support the hygiene hypothesis. These studies also support that mycobacterial treatment results in regulatory mechanisms that restored the immune balance.

In this presentation, the most recent basic and clinical findings concerning mycobacterium and allergic diseases will be highlighted.

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