

## Adipose tissue inflammation and cancer cachexia: Possible role of nuclear transcription factors

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### ABSTRACT

Cancer cachexia is a multifaceted syndrome whose aetiology is extremely complex and is directly related to poor patient prognosis and survival. Changes in lipid metabolism in cancer cachexia result in marked reduction of total fat mass, increased lipolysis, total oxidation of fatty acids, hyperlipidaemia, hypertriglyceridaemia, and hypercholesterolaemia. These changes are believed to be induced by inflammatory mediators, such as tumour necrosis factor- $\alpha$  (TNF- $\alpha$ ) and other factors.

Attention has recently been drawn to the current theory that cachexia is a chronic inflammatory state, mainly caused by the host's reaction to the tumour. Changes in expression of numerous inflammatory mediators, notably in white adipose tissue (WAT), may trigger several changes in WAT homeostasis. The inhibition of adipocyte differentiation by PPAR $\gamma$  is paralleled by the appearance of smaller adipocytes, which may partially account for the inhibitory effect of PPAR $\gamma$  on inflammatory gene expression. Furthermore, inflammatory modulation and/or inhibition seems to be dependent on the IKK/NF- $\kappa$ B pathway, suggesting that a possible interaction between NF- $\kappa$ B and PPAR $\gamma$  is required to modulate WAT inflammation induced by cancer cachexia.

In this article, current literature on the possible mechanisms of NF- $\kappa$ B and PPAR $\gamma$  regulation of WAT cells during cancer cachexia are discussed. This review aims to assess the role of a possible interaction between NF- $\kappa$ B and PPAR $\gamma$  in the setting of cancer cachexia as well as its significant role as a potential modulator of chronic inflammation that could be explored therapeutically.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. General comments (cachexia)

Cancer cachexia, whose most striking symptom is a marked and rapid decrease in body weight, characterised by a depletion of

skeletal muscle and white adipose tissue (WAT) mass, affects around half of all patients with cancer and is present in most (more than two thirds) of those with advanced cancer [1,2]. Cachexia is thus extremely detrimental and is considered to be the direct cause of 20% of cancer deaths [3,4]. Cachectic patients also show higher morbidity related to radio- and chemotherapy treatment [5]. Although the syndrome has received growing attention in the last few decades, its cause remains unknown and no known therapy is available to reverse its detrimental effects [6].

Changes in lipid metabolism in cancer cachexia induce a marked reduction of total fat mass, increases in lipolysis, oxidation of fatty acids, and hyperlipidaemia. In addition, cachexia is associated with a reduction in the rate of lipogenesis, and diminished activity and expression of lipoprotein lipase (LPL) [2,7,8]. Enhanced levels of hormone sensitive lipase (HSL) mRNA and protein can be detected in tissues of cachectic patients (notably in the liver and WAT) [9]. Decreases in WAT content, a consequence of lipodystrophies and lipoatrophies, is also a characteristic of cancer cachexia;

*Abbreviations:* TFs, transcriptional factors; PPARs, peroxisome proliferator-activated receptors; NF- $\kappa$ B, nuclear factor  $\kappa$ -light-chain-enhancer of activated B cells;  $\kappa$ B $\alpha$ , nuclear factor of  $\kappa$  light polypeptide gene enhancer in B-cells inhibitor,  $\alpha$ ; siRNA, small interfering RNA; PG, 15d-PGJ<sub>2</sub>; p. M $\phi$ , peritoneal macrophages; TNF- $\alpha$ , tumour necrosis factors; CNS, central nervous system; LPS, lipopolysaccharide; NMDA/NO, N-methyl-D-aspartate/nitric oxide; IBD, inflammatory bowel disease; NR4A, nuclear hormone receptor 4A; NRs, nuclear receptors; HDAC3, histone deacetylase 3; GSK-3 $\beta$ , glycogen synthase kinase 3; TZD, thiazolidinedione; TR, troglitazone.

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in fact, 85% decrease in body fat has been reported in lung cancer patients. This often leads to hyperlipidaemia and insulin resistance, as well as to complications in antitumour therapies [3]. The loss of fat depots cannot be fully explained by the reduction of appetite that leads to anorexia, and occurs frequently in association with the syndrome [10]. Recent studies [9,11–13] have proposed that the progress of cachexia is closely related with the imbalance of catabolic and anabolic processes in peripheral tissues, notably in the adipose tissue.

Until recently there has been no consensus on the factors that cause and maintain cachexia. Factors secreted by the growing tumour are apparently involved in the mobilisation of fatty acids and proteins [4,14]. Nevertheless, the conception of the syndrome as a chronic inflammatory state, in which the main causative factor is the host's reaction to the presence of the tumour, has become more common [15–17]. Thus, it has been claimed that the maintenance of this chronic inflammatory condition is a result of the production of chemical mediators associated with the depletion of WAT and skeletal muscle, which can be divided into two categories: (1) those whose source is the growing tumour and (2) humoral factors (mainly cytokines) [18], secreted by the host's cells and tissues [1,19,20] (Fig. 1).

Changes in the expression of numerous inflammatory mediators, including TNF- $\alpha$  and tumour-derived lipid-mobilising factors [18,21] from both the tumour and host tissue may trigger several disturbances in WAT homeostasis [13]. Loss of WAT is consistently present in patients and animal models of cancer and WAT seems to be consistently affected even before changes in body and free fat mass can be observed. Despite these facts, the importance of WAT physiology for the control of adiposity, as well as the role of adipocyte-secreted adipokines in the regulation of body composition in this setting has been only recently addressed [22–24].

It is well established that peroxisome proliferator activated receptor gamma (PPAR $\gamma$ ) has a pivotal role in adipogenesis and

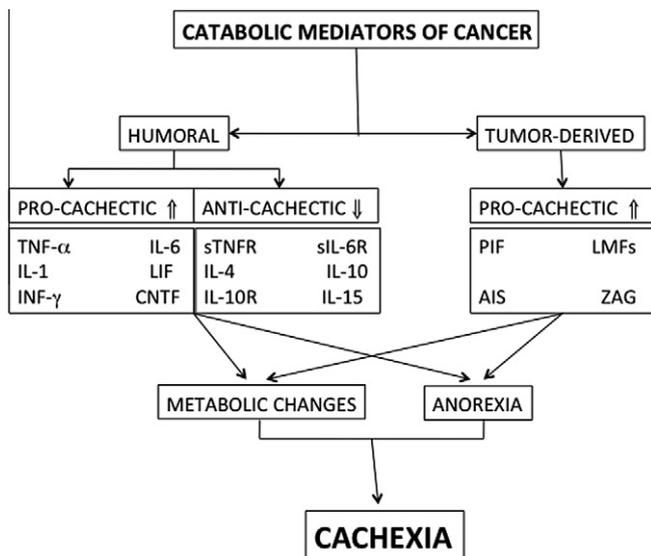
adipocyte function, regulating WAT homeostasis [25]. In the recent years, a great deal of attention has been given to the possible role of PPARs, most notably PPAR $\gamma$ , in chronic inflammatory conditions, and to that this nuclear hormone receptor may contribute to the pathogenesis of many diseases in which disordered lipid metabolism is a common feature [26,27]. Furthermore, activation of PPAR $\gamma$  in WAT during these conditions seems to be dependent on the nuclear factor  $\kappa$ B (NF- $\kappa$ B) pathway, suggesting that, possibly, an interaction between NF- $\kappa$ B and PPAR $\gamma$  is required to modulate WAT inflammation induced by cancer cachexia. In this article, we review the literature on the possible mechanisms of NF- $\kappa$ B and PPAR $\gamma$  regulation in the setting of cancer cachexia.

## 1.2. WAT inflammation: infiltration of macrophages

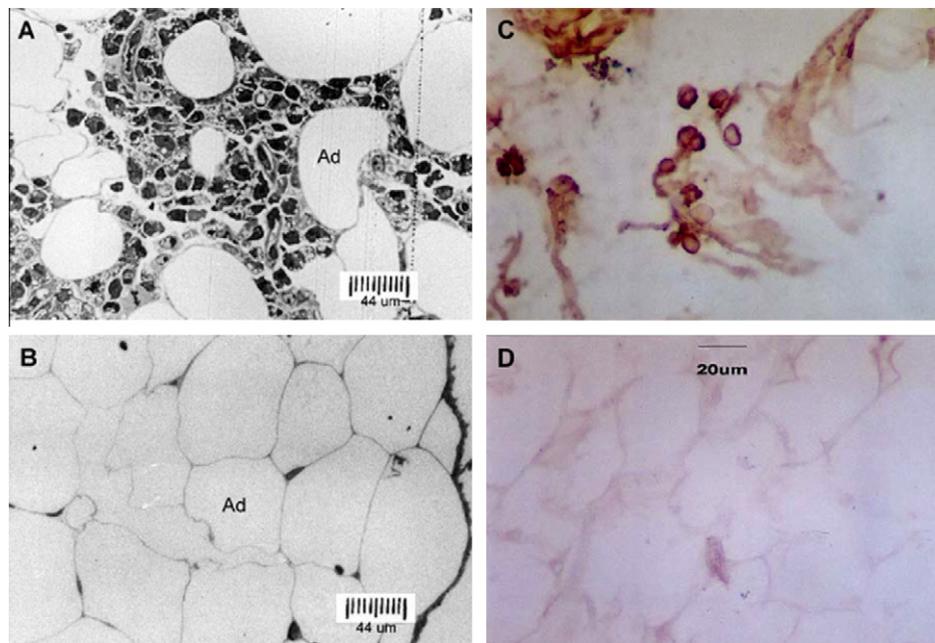
Besides serving as an energy storage depot, WAT has numerous functions. It is well-accepted as the largest endocrine organ, secreting over 100 molecules described so far [12,28], which include cytokines (TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-6, IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-10, among many other) and adipokines (leptin, adiponectin, visfatin, to mention a few). Its secretory function is precisely controlled under physiological conditions; however, in pathophysiological conditions such as obesity, there is an increase in the production of cytokines and chemokines, followed by a pronounced macrophage (M $\phi$ ) infiltration [29,30]. The interaction of soluble factors produced by the adipocytes and M $\phi$  regulates tissue functions in an autocrine and/or paracrine manner [31,32]. Among several inflammatory cytokines secreted by WAT, TNF- $\alpha$  has been the focus of most studies and has been shown to be a regulator of insulin resistance [33], inducer of apoptosis in pre-adipocytes and adipocytes [34], and a positive modulator of lipolysis [35,36]. Recently, alterations in leptin secretion have been shown to be modulated by TNF- $\alpha$  in cancer cachexia [37]. In addition, in cachectic rats, TNF- $\alpha$ , in combination with other cytokines, has also been associated to the reduction of LPL activity and lipogenesis and increases in HSL mRNA expression [7,38]. Therefore, TNF- $\alpha$ , along with other cytokines and hormones, may induce in WAT many of the metabolic alterations observed in cachectic patients [18].

In addition to highlighting the importance of WAT in the genesis and development of cancer cachexia, Machado et al. [37] have shown that rats afflicted with the Walker 256 carcinosarcoma show a significant increase in WAT macrophage infiltration (retro-peritoneal, epididymal, and mesenteric pads) already observed on the seventh day after the inoculation of the tumour (with induces death after 14 days), with the mesenteric deposit being the most affected (Fig. 2). Moreover, these cells secrete more TNF- $\alpha$  when cultivated either with homologue serum (from an animal subcutaneously inoculated with Walker 256 tumour) or when stimulated with phytohemagglutinin, demonstrating that such alteration is due to the presence of the tumour (Fig. 3). These results resemble those focused on obesity, metabolic syndrome, and type II diabetes, in which an increase in WATM $\phi$  infiltration is observed, suggesting that M $\phi$  seem to be the main local source of pro-inflammatory cytokines significantly contributing to systemic inflammation. Nonetheless, literature regarding the role of infiltrating M $\phi$  in WAT during the development of cancer cachexia lacks consistent data.

Immune system cells, such as activated M $\phi$  and lymphocytes, secrete cytokines that act at several different sites, including bone marrow, myocytes, hepatocytes, endothelial cells, neurons and adipocytes, and modulate a complex cascade of biological responses. These cascades lead to a series of alterations that ultimately result in body weight loss associated with cachexia. The main cytokines known to be involved in this condition are tumour necrosis factor- $\alpha$  (TNF- $\alpha$ ), interleukin-1 $\beta$  and -6 (IL-1 $\beta$  and IL-6), interferon- $\gamma$  (IFN- $\gamma$ ), and leukotriene B4 (LTB4). Interestingly, these cytokines



**Fig. 1.** Both tumor-derived and humoral (cytokines) factors are involved in mediating anorexia and metabolic changes, characteristic of the cachectic state. Combination of chemical mediators secreted by the host, including pro-cachectic factors (tumour necrosis factor- $\alpha$  (TNF- $\alpha$ ); interleukin-6 (IL-6); interleukin-1 $\beta$  (IL-1 $\beta$ ); interferon- $\gamma$  (INF- $\gamma$ ); ciliary neurotrophic factor; and leukaemia inhibitor factor) and anti-cachectic factors (soluble receptor of TNF- $\alpha$  (sTNFR); soluble receptor of IL-6 (sIL-6R); antagonist receptor of IL-1 (IL-1ra); IL-4; IL-10; and IL-15), along those secreted by the tumour, such as proteolysis-inducing factor (PIF), lipid-mobilising factor (LMF); toxohormone-L and AIS; anaemia-inducing substance), and zinc- $\alpha$  2-glycoprotein (ZAG; a protein belonging to the class I major histocompatibility complex family). Adapted with permission from [76].



**Fig. 2.** Aspects of mesenteric adipose tissue of tumor bearing rats (A) at light microscopy, showing conspicuous infiltration of leucocytes. Control rat tissue (B). Ad adipocyte. Immunocytochemistry with anti-rat mononuclear phagocyte in the mesenteric adipose tissue of tumor-bearing rats (C) and control reaction (D). Adapted with permission from [37].

Source	TB	TB + PHA	TB + TBserum
TNF $\alpha$ (pg/ml)			
EAT	1276.4 $\pm$ 78.5	1763.2 $\pm$ 145.9	1699.6 $\pm$ 129.4
RPAT	1198.3 $\pm$ 67.3	1604.3 $\pm$ 114.9	1554.3 $\pm$ 165.2
MES	1766.9 $\pm$ 204.6*	2361.8 $\pm$ 177.5*	2105.6 $\pm$ 188.4*
PM	256.5 $\pm$ 26.3 <sup>#</sup>	1842.9 $\pm$ 155.8 <sup>a</sup>	1699.5 $\pm$ 112.8 <sup>a</sup>
PGE2 (pg/ml)			
EAT	278.5 $\pm$ 18.9		348.4 $\pm$ 27.3
RPAT	297.5 $\pm$ 22.1		335.7 $\pm$ 22.8
MES	310.6 $\pm$ 27.0		356.2 $\pm$ 31.9
PM	65.4 $\pm$ 9.5 <sup>#</sup>		304.7 $\pm$ 23.6 <sup>a</sup>

**Fig. 3.** EAT epididimal adipose tissue, RPAT retroperitoneal adipose tissue, MES mesenteric adipose tissue, PM peritoneal macrophages, TB tumor-bearing, PHA after incubation with phytohemagglutinin (10  $\mu$ g/mL), TB serum after incubation with autologous tumor-bearing rat serum (10%). Triplicates of samples obtained from 10 animals were used. Each mL contained  $1.0 \times 10^{-7}$  cells. \* $P < 0.05$  compared with EAT and RPAT; <sup>a</sup> $P < 0.05$  compared with control PM. <sup>#</sup> $P < 0.05$  compared with adipose tissue-derivative cells. Adapted with permission from [37].

share similar metabolic effects, and their biological activities are interrelated, most notably in regard to the modulation of immune response (innate and adaptive) and inflammation. They also act synergistically in many situations [39].

The infiltrating M $\emptyset$  in cachectic rats can, in part, favour the establishment of an inflammatory milieu, similar to that observed in obesity. In this manner, infiltrating M $\emptyset$  may contribute to metabolic disturbances, thereby worsening cachexia and depleting fat deposits. The chemokine, monocyte chemoattractant protein-1 (MCP-1), is believed to be responsible for the migration of monocytes to the adipose tissue in systemic chronic inflammation [40,41]. During the inflammatory process, MCP-1 plays an important role in promoting the attraction of monocytes, T lymphocytes, and natural killer to the site of inflammation [42].

TNF- $\alpha$  also induces the expression and production of MCP-1 by cultured adipocytes [43]. In contrast, IL-10, which is highly

expressed by WAT [44], inhibits the production of MCP-1 by adipocytes and inhibits the production and expression of TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-6, and IL-1 $\beta$  by cultured monocytes. During cancer cachexia, TNF- $\alpha$  increases adipocyte and/or pre-adipocyte MCP-1 expression and production, leading to a higher recruitment of monocytes and aggravating inflammation. The infiltrating M $\emptyset$  also cause an increase in the release of other inflammatory cytokines (IL-6 and IL-1 $\beta$ ) in addition to TNF- $\alpha$  and prostaglandin E $_2$  [37]. TNF $\alpha$  produced by macrophages within the WAT of cachectic subjects probably requires both the IKK $\beta$  (inhibitor of NF- $\kappa$ B kinase- $\beta$ ) and NF- $\kappa$ B. JNK-MAP4K4-AP1 (Jun N-terminal kinase-mitogen activated protein kinase kinase kinase-4-Activator protein-1) signalling pathways. Macrophage-derived TNF- $\alpha$  enhances lipolysis and downregulates peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor  $\gamma$  (PPAR $\gamma$ )-mediated triglyceride (TG) biosynthesis and storage in adipocytes [45].

Adipocytes, in contrast, release anti-inflammatory cytokines (IL-10 and IL-1ra) in the attempt to minimise tissue inflammation by the following means: (1) through autocrine/paracrine action inhibiting MCP-1 production, (2) through inhibition of the production of inflammatory cytokines by M $\emptyset$ , and (3) through inhibition of monocyte infiltration. Moreover, MCP-1, and TNF- $\alpha$  receptors type I (TNFR1) and type II (TNFR2) [46] are modulated during cachexia. Despite the importance of M $\emptyset$  in the modulation of adipocyte function through a balance in the production of pro- and anti-inflammatory cytokines, and consequently, in the production of MCP-1 and other inflammatory mediators, the underlying mechanisms or, the details describing how this process takes place during the development of cancer-associated cachexia are not fully elucidated.

### 1.3. Alterations in adipose tissue and nuclear transcription factors related to the aetiology of cachexia

As described above, the molecular changes of WAT seem to be triggered before any detectable changes in body and free fat mass weight during cancer cachexia progression [4,23,37,47]. The importance of WAT in the control of adiposity and the role of

adipocyte-secreted adipokines in the regulation of body weight and local inflammation has spurred an interest in the potential roles of nuclear transcription factors in cachexia [11,44]. The role of PPAR $\gamma$ , which has a relevant action controlling adipogenesis and adipocyte function, as well as of the NF- $\kappa$ B pathway, which up-regulates the expression of genes involved in pro-inflammatory and immunological responses (cytokines, enzymes, immune receptors, and adhesion molecules) in this setting has been recently addressed [48]. On the other hand, alterations in the production and/or activity of adipokines that are involved in the pathogenesis of HIV-associated lipodystrophy [49] and the molecular mechanisms related with pathologic conditions such as lipodystrophy and cachexia are currently unknown.

Furthermore, a reduction in LPL activity and the capacity to incorporate long-chain fatty acids [50] is also accompanied by a major decrease in mRNA expression of specific adipogenic transcription factors, including CCAAT/enhancer binding protein alpha (C/EBP  $\alpha$ ), CCAAT/enhancer binding protein beta (C/EBP  $\beta$ ), peroxisome proliferator activated receptor gamma (PPAR $\gamma$ ), and sterol regulatory element binding protein-1c (SREBP-1c) and some of the target genes that encode lipogenic enzymes, such as acetyl-CoA carboxylase (ACC), fatty acid synthase (FAS), stearoyl-CoA desaturase-1 (SCD-1) and glycerol-3-phosphate acyltransferase (GPAT), proteins that are characteristically expressed in mature adipocytes [3].

The differentiation of adipocytes, also termed adipogenesis, is a process that is highly controlled by a set of transcription factors, which in turn regulate the gene expression of adipocytes [51]. Briefly, the CCAAT/enhancer binding proteins and PPAR $\gamma$  are key players in adipogenesis. *In vitro* studies have shown that the adipogenic program is triggered by the activation of C/EBP  $\delta$  and  $\beta$ , the latter being responsible for activating the expression of PPAR $\gamma$ , which in turn induces the expression of C/EBP $\alpha$ . These factors cooperate with each other, inducing the expression of a series of proteins that confers the classical adipocyte phenotype upon the cell [51,52].

The maturation of the adipocyte is followed by the intracellular accumulation of triglyceride (TG), a process that is primarily mediated by SREBP-1C. Besides activating gene expression of PPAR $\gamma$ -2, SREBP-1C also activates lipogenesis via the expression of genes such as ACC, FAS, SCD-1, and GPAT [53]. In addition to TG synthesis, through PPAR $\gamma$ -mediated regulation of these proteins, it also regulates a subset of well-characterised proteins contributing to both lipid-droplet formation and lipid-droplet-regulated lipolysis [45], such as perilipin, CIDEA and FSP27 (CIDE family proteins). However, little is known about the possible effects of cachexia on adipogenesis.

#### 1.4. Role PPAR $\gamma$ and inflammation

PPAR $\gamma$  is a member of a superfamily of nuclear receptors that plays an important role in the control of a multitude of physiological events. It is highly expressed in adipose tissue and stimulates the transcription of many adipocyte-specific genes and the initial steps of the adipogenesis, playing a critical role in the regulation of adipocyte differentiation [51]. There are two PPAR $\gamma$  isoforms, 1 and 2, which are generated by different promoters and alternative splicing mechanisms. PPAR $\gamma$ -1 is highly expressed in WAT and, to a lesser degree, in a variety of other cell types (M $\emptyset$ , pneumocytes, and colon epithelium, etc.) but PPAR $\gamma$ -2 is found exclusively in the adipose tissue. PPAR $\gamma$  can be pharmacologically activated by synthetic compounds called thiazolidinediones (TZD), which are clinically used as anti-diabetic agents [54]. However, the natural ligand for PPAR $\gamma$  has not been identified and remains the subject of intensive investigation. To be transcriptionally active, PPAR $\gamma$  has to partner with the RXR- $\alpha$

receptor, forming a heterodimer, which then binds to specific recognition sequences (PPREs) in the regulatory regions of target genes. Many genes involved in lipogenesis and insulin sensitivity contain binding sites to PPAR $\gamma$  such as aP2, LPL, adiponectin, phosphoenolpyruvatecarboxykinase (PEPCK), and glucose transporter-4 (GLUT4) [52,55].

It is noteworthy that PPAR $\gamma$  is considered to be the master regulator of adipogenesis. A series of gain-of-function experiments conducted in non-adipogenic mouse fibroblasts ectopically expressing PPAR $\gamma$ , demonstrated that the expression of this nuclear factor alone is able to trigger the entire adipogenic program [51]. Gene knockout studies demonstrated conclusively that PPAR $\gamma$  is essential for adipocyte differentiation *in vivo*, clearly showing that PPAR $\gamma$   $-/-$  mice were not able to develop either white or brown adipocytes *in vivo* [52]. Importantly, PPAR $\gamma$  is involved in ameliorating insulin sensitivity and, like PPAR  $\alpha$ , in the attenuation of inflammation [27]. Finally, considering the importance of PPAR $\gamma$  in controlling adipogenesis and adipocyte function it would be interesting to address whether pharmacological manipulation of this nuclear receptor could revert cachexia associated with cancer.

Recently, a great deal of attention has been given to the possible role of the PPARs, notably PPAR $\gamma$ , in chronic inflammatory conditions. Inhibition of PPAR $\gamma$  function by inflammatory cytokines may contribute to the pathogenesis of many diseases, such as insulin resistance, atherosclerosis, inflammation, and cancer cachexia [56,57]. Disordered lipid metabolism is the common feature of these diseases.

Initial studies carried out with WAT from rats and 3T3-L1 fibroblasts have shown an antagonistic relationship between TNF- $\alpha$  and PPAR $\gamma$ , especially in regard to the control of adipocyte differentiation. In fact, TNF- $\alpha$  has been shown to be an inhibitor of LPL and mRNA expression in 3T3-L1 cells [58]. TNF- $\alpha$  also causes a marked dose-dependent reduction in LPL activity in adipocytes collected from human subcutaneous adipose tissue [59]. This alteration may also occur, at least partially, as a result of increased lipolysis in WAT associated with the subsequent increase in very low-density lipoprotein (VLDL) secretion by the liver [60]. Moreover, TNF- $\alpha$  is a powerful inhibitor of adipocyte differentiation through a mechanism that is characterised by the reduction of gene expression of adipogenic factors such as C/EBP $\alpha$  and PPAR $\gamma$  [61].

Another important function of PPARs is the inhibition of inflammatory gene expression [45,62]. The anti-inflammatory activity of PPAR $\gamma$  has been demonstrated in a study in which PMA-induced cytokine synthesis by macrophages was inhibited by prostanoids of the prostaglandin J2 family, which are also specific ligands for PPAR $\gamma$  [63]. In several model systems, PPAR $\gamma$  repressed target genes of the transcription factors nuclear factor- $\kappa$ B (NF- $\kappa$ B), nuclear factor of activated T cells (NFAT), activator protein 1 (AP1) and signal transducers and activators of transcription (STATs) in a signal-specific manner [45,64]. The inhibition of cytokine production by PPAR $\gamma$  is related to its function in the regulation of adipocyte differentiation. The inflammatory cytokine TNF- $\alpha$  antagonises the synthesis of PPAR $\gamma$ , blocks adipocyte differentiation, and contributes to insulin resistance. PPAR $\gamma$  ligands, in turn, promote insulin sensitivity and adipocyte differentiation, as well as blocking TNF- $\alpha$  production [45]. Bing et al. [3] have demonstrated that PPAR $\gamma$  mRNA is reduced in epididymal fat from tumour-bearing mice (MAC16), along with diminished expression of some lipogenic genes. However, how the inflammatory status induced by the presence of the tumour affects the biology of adipose tissue is still an issue to be experimentally explored.

On the other hand, regardless of that important role, little is known about the molecular mechanisms involved in these alterations. As recently reported, despite major reduction in mRNA levels of PPAR $\gamma$  in epididymal fat depots from tumour-bearing mice (MAC16), followed by reduction of the expression of genes related

**Table 1**

Selected articles regarding transcriptional factors in different inflammatory models and diseases conditions.

References	TFs	Type/model	General comments
Lehrke and Lazar (2005) [56]	PPAR $\gamma$	Review	Required for the accumulation of adipose tissue and hence contributes to obesity
Sharma and Staels (2007) [57]	PPAR $\gamma$	Review	Improves adipose tissue function and may have a role in preventing progression of insulin resistance
Ricote and Glass (2007) [62]	PPAR $\delta$	Review	Recent studies have highlighted molecular transrepression mechanism in macrophages
Azuma et al. (2001) [63]	PPAR $\gamma$	Original/p. M $\phi$	PG may be a negative regulator of macrophage functions through PPAR $\gamma$
Straus and Glass (2007) [64]	PPARs	Review	Anti-inflammatory activity suggests their possible use for treating human inflammatory and autoimmune diseases
Zhande and Brownsey (1996) [87]	PPARs	Review	Necessary for the maintenance of the adipocyte phenotype and important component of the mechanism by which TNF- $\alpha$ exerts its antiadipogenic effects
Huang and Glass (2010) [88]	NF- $\kappa$ B	Review	Intersection of nuclear receptors and inflammation have revealed mechanisms of positive and negative transcriptional control
Baldwin et al. (1996) [66]	NF- $\kappa$ B	Review	Constitutively active in several cell types, potentially playing unexpected roles in regulation of gene expression and the implications for therapies of diseases
Yamamoto et al. (2004) [67]	NF- $\kappa$ B	Review	Kinases activate the NF- $\kappa$ B pathway through distinct steps demonstrating the potential for defining new therapeutic targets
Glezer et al. (2003) [68]	NF- $\kappa$ B	Original - CNS	Dexamethasone caused a stronger reduction in LPS induction of NF- $\kappa$ B in CNS
Celec et al. (2004) [69]	NF- $\kappa$ B	Review	<i>In vivo</i> studies have shown important facts regarding NF- $\kappa$ B participation in the pathogenesis of several diseases
De Bosscher et al. (2006) [72]	NF- $\kappa$ B	Review	Activated NRs, especially the glucocorticoid receptor, the estrogen receptor and PPAR, can inhibit the activity of NF- $\kappa$ B
Rakoncay et al. (2008) [74]	NF- $\kappa$ B	Review/acute pancreatitis	Recent advances in the investigation of pancreatic and extrapancreatic NF- $\kappa$ B activation have been related to acute pancreatitis
Sriwijitkamol et al. (2006) [65]	I $\kappa$ B/NF $\kappa$ B pathway	Original- Human skeletal muscle	Subjects with type 2 diabetes have reduced I $\kappa$ B protein abundance in muscle. Exercise training reverts this abnormality
Zamboni et al. (2007) [82]	NF $\kappa$ B pathway	Original/adipose tissue (subcutaneous)	Abdominal adiposity and leptin are independent predictors of adiponectin gene expression and ADP gene expression is strongly related to I $\kappa$ B- $\alpha$ mRNA
Ruan et al. (2002) [75]	NF- $\kappa$ B	Original/ 3T3-L1	Changes in adipocyte gene expression induced by TNF- $\alpha$ could lead to insulin resistance. NF- $\kappa$ B is an obligatory mediator of most of these responses
Gao et al. (2006) [79]	PPAR $\gamma$ /NF- $\kappa$ B pathway	Original - ssI $\kappa$ B $\alpha$ cell line and 3T3-L1 adipocytes	I $\kappa$ B $\alpha$ -dependent nuclear translocation of HDAC3 is responsible for PPAR $\gamma$ inhibition by TNF- $\alpha$
Su et al. (1999) [73]	PPAR $\gamma$ /NF- $\kappa$ B	Original/colonic epithelial cells	TZD ligands for PPAR $\gamma$ markedly reduce colonic inflammation in a mouse model of IBD, suggesting that colonic PPAR $\gamma$ may be a therapeutic target
Ye (2008) [80]	PPAR $\gamma$ /NF- $\kappa$ B	Review	PPAR $\gamma$ activity is regulated by TNF- $\alpha$ at pre-translational and post-translational levels
Tamai et al. (2010) [78]	PPAR $\gamma$ /C/EBP/ NF- $\kappa$ B	Original / 3T3-L1 adipocytes	Treatment with a PPAR $\gamma$ agonist rendered the cells vulnerable to TNF- $\alpha$ -induced apoptosis in preadipocytes
Glass and Ogawa (2006) [89]	PPARs/LXLS/NF- $\kappa$ B/NR4A	Review	PPARs and LXRs function in a combinatorial manner with the glucocorticoid receptor to integrate local and systemic responses to inflammation
Ban et al. (2010) [48]	PPAR $\gamma$ /NF- $\kappa$ B	Original - colon cancer cell	TR (PPAR $\gamma$ agonist) inhibits colon cancer cell growth via inactivation of NF- $\kappa$ B by suppressing GSK-3 $\beta$ activity

with the lipid storing ability of adipose tissue through inhibiting fatty acid and triglyceride synthesis [3], little is known about the aetiology of cachexia or how these alterations and/or interactions take place over the development of this condition. For additional data on either this aspect or on the following section, please see Table 1.

### 1.5. NF- $\kappa$ B and inflammation

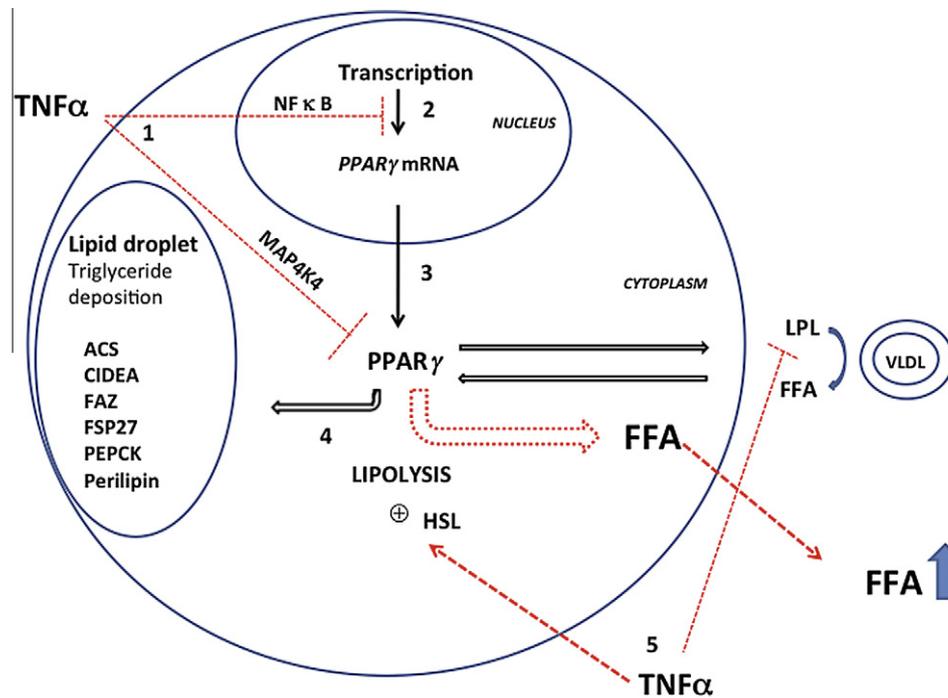
The transcription nuclear factor  $\kappa$ B (NF- $\kappa$ B) was described in 1986 as a protein, which once activated by agents such as lipopolysaccharide (LPS), has the capacity to bind to a sequence of 10 base pairs on promoter region of the light  $\kappa$  chain genes of the antibody molecules of B cells (kB) [65,66]. The NF- $\kappa$ B “family” is comprised of five proteins, which include p65, p50, p52, RelB, and c-Rel. The dimerisation of these proteins is necessary to initiate the protein-DNA interaction. The predominant activated dimer is the p50–p65 heterodimer. In addition, p65 has a post-transcriptional

C-terminal domain that is crucial for its capacity to activate inflammatory gene expression [67].

The activation of the NF- $\kappa$ B seems always to involve reactive oxygen species (oxidative stress) and the increase in intracellular calcium. When not stimulated, NF- $\kappa$ B is localised in the cytoplasm bound to an inhibitory protein, I $\kappa$ B. This complex prevents the translocation of the NF- $\kappa$ B to the nucleus. Therefore, the phosphorylation and the degradation of I $\kappa$ B are necessary for the activation and translocation of this nuclear factor [68].

NF- $\kappa$ B up-regulates the expression of genes involved in pro-inflammatory and immunological responses (cytokines, enzymes, immune receptors, and adhesion molecules), in addition to regulating the synthesis of C-reactive protein and initiating the transcription of cytokines such as TNF- $\alpha$ , IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-2, and IL-6 [69]. In patients with sepsis, the expression of NF- $\kappa$ B is high, and when persistent, is associated with higher death rates [70].

NF- $\kappa$ B and AP1 regulate most of the immune response associated genes and the majority of immune suppressive reagents



**Fig. 4.** PPAR $\gamma$  downregulation by TNF- $\alpha$  (from both tumor-derived and infiltrated macrophages) impairs triglyceride storage in adipose tissue cells. Peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor $\gamma$  (PPAR $\gamma$ ) expression may be regulated at the transcriptional level by tumor-necrosis factor- $\alpha$  (TNF- $\alpha$ ) (arrow 1) through the activation of nuclear factor- $\kappa$ B (NF- $\kappa$ B), which negatively regulate PPAR $\gamma$  mRNA (arrow 2) and protein (arrow 3) expression. Up-regulation of MAP4K4 (mitogen-activated protein kinase kinase kinase-4) induced by TNF- $\alpha$  may also transcriptionally control PPAR $\gamma$  (arrow 4) that can contribute to the control of triglyceride biosynthesis, hydrolysis and deposition in the lipid droplet – the lipid storage organelle of adipocytes (arrow 5); phosphoenolpyruvate carboxykinase (PEPCK), fatty acid synthase (FAS), Acyl-CoA synthetase (ACS), lipoprotein lipase (LPL) and lipid-droplet proteins including CIDEA, FSP27 and perilipin. Adapted from [45].

inhibit the activation of these transcription factors [71]. A strong inhibition of NF- $\kappa$ B and AP1 activation by PPAR $\gamma$  ligands has been observed in macrophage and epithelial cells [72]. Although the activation of NF- $\kappa$ B and AP1 upon cell stimulation is well-described, the mechanisms by which PPAR $\gamma$  inhibits both AP1 and NF- $\kappa$ B activation could result indirectly from the PPAR $\gamma$ -induced genes in the macrophage and the T cells. Recently, Su et al. [73] demonstrated a role of the PPAR $\gamma$  ligand 15-deoxyprostaglandin J2 (15d-PGJ2) in inhibiting epithelial inflammation and in the inhibition of NF- $\kappa$ B activation, which is mediated by an I $\kappa$ B- $\alpha$ -dependent mechanism, indicating the function of PPAR $\gamma$  in regulation of NF- $\kappa$ B activation to be indirect. More recently, however, direct binding of 15d-PGJ2 with I $\kappa$ B has been identified, an effect that inhibits the activation of I $\kappa$ B and results in inhibition of NF- $\kappa$ B activation [74].

Ruan et al. [75] have shown that 3T3-L1 cells cultivated at the presence of TNF- $\alpha$  demonstrate a wide range of alterations in gene expression, which are critical for insulin sensitivity and adipogenesis. Moreover, TNF- $\alpha$  is also able to induce the expression of several transcription factors and genes related to the activation of NF- $\kappa$ B, as well as genes involved in cell growth, proliferation, and inflammation. TNF- $\alpha$  suppresses the gene expression of several nuclear transcription factors that are essential for adipocyte differentiation and function, including PPAR $\gamma$ , RXR $\alpha$ , and C/EBP $\alpha$ . Thus, along with the important role of TNF- $\alpha$  in the aetiology and progress of the cachexia [1,19,76,77], TNF- $\alpha$  also inhibits PPAR $\gamma$  activity at two different levels [78]. Recently, [79] reported a reduced expression of PPAR $\gamma$  in adipocytes after chronic (>16 h) treatment with TNF- $\alpha$ . On the other hand, acute TNF- $\alpha$  treatment inhibits the PPAR $\gamma$  ligand-dependent activity without decreasing its expression or its DNA-binding activity. Thus, both chronic and acute inhibition is dependent on the IKK/NF- $\kappa$ B pathway [79,80]. In regard to the

acute effect of TNF- $\alpha$ , NF- $\kappa$ B was reported to reduce the DNA-binding activity of PPAR $\gamma$  [78]. However, the most important result of this study, corroborated by others [81,82] was the fact that the activation of the NF- $\kappa$ B is essential for the alterations induced by TNF- $\alpha$  in the expression of genes related with insulin resistance and metabolism of lipids in the 3T3-L1 cells (Fig. 4).

Previous reports suggest the possibility of selective deletion of TNF- $\alpha$  in the adipocytes in the adipose tissue, and in the decrease of WAT mass through multiple mechanisms including inhibition of lipogenesis, facilitation of lipolysis, suppression of adipogenesis and selective induction of adipocyte apoptosis [78,83]. However, in preadipocytes (*in vitro*), following exposure to TNF- $\alpha$ , there is a rapid activation of NF- $\kappa$ B, a phenomenon that does not occur in native adipocytes. Inhibition of NF- $\kappa$ B renders preadipocytes susceptible to TNF- $\alpha$ -induced apoptosis, suggesting that distinct NF- $\kappa$ B activities are the determinants for the separate apoptotic responses [83].

As previously mentioned, during adipocyte differentiation, the expression and activity of PPAR $\gamma$  are upregulated. Treatment of preadipocytes with a PPAR $\gamma$  agonist attenuated NF- $\kappa$ B activation and rendered the cells vulnerable to TNF- $\alpha$ -induced apoptosis. Conversely, treatment of adipocytes with a PPAR $\gamma$  antagonist enhanced NF- $\kappa$ B activation and conferred resistance to TNF- $\alpha$ -induced apoptosis, suggesting the involvement of PPAR $\gamma$  in the suppression of NF- $\kappa$ B in adipocytes [84,85]. Following differentiation of preadipocytes, expression and activity of C/EBP, especially C/EBP $\alpha$  and C/EBP $\beta$ , are upregulated in adipocytes, indicating that overexpression of individual C/EBPs significantly inhibited activation of NF- $\kappa$ B in preadipocytes [78,86]. Furthermore, in the same study, transfection with siRNA for C/EBP $\alpha$  and C/EBP $\beta$  enhanced the activity of the NF- $\kappa$ B pathways in adipocytes, suggesting that C/EBP is also involved in the repression of NF- $\kappa$ B in these cells.

Taking together, these results suggest novel mechanisms by which TNF- $\alpha$  selectively inhibits adipogenesis in the adipose tissue. The C/EBP and PPAR $\gamma$ -mediated suppression of NF- $\kappa$ B may contribute to TNF- $\alpha$ -related loss of adipose tissue mass under certain pathological situations, such as cachexia [83].

Nevertheless, as far as we know, no study has evaluated the activation and/or suppression of the NF- $\kappa$ B pathway in adipocytes in a cachectic state or how these alterations take place throughout the development of this condition in animal models or in patients with various neoplasms.

## 2. Concluding remarks

Studies over the last 10 year shave demonstrated that chronic inflammation underlies cancer cachexia. Based on extensive experimental evidence, the role of adipose tissue as a dominant regulator of whole-body lipid and glucose homeostases is now well established; dysfunctions in adipose tissue metabolism have a direct impact on lipid and glucose homeostases. Adipose tissue inflammation in cancer cachexia includes abnormal secretion of cytokines, impairment in triglyceride storage and increased lipolysis. As consequence, adipocytes from cancer cachectic subjects may secrete large amounts of MCP-1, possibly contributing to macrophage infiltration into adipose tissue. Interestingly, recent studies have highlighted the negative regulation by cytokines, including TNF $\alpha$ , of gene products that are crucial for lipid storage, such as the transcriptional factor PPAR $\gamma$  and its downstream target genes that control fatty acid synthesis, esterification and sequestration as triglyceride in lipid droplets.

In addition, a possible interaction between NF- $\kappa$ B and PPAR $\gamma$  in the modulation of several functions in white adipose tissue has been proposed to play an important role in this setting and may also have a significant role as a potential modulator of the process that could be explored therapeutically. However, additional studies are required before an optimum treatment is identified.

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