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Respiration

HUMAN ALVEOLAR MACROPHAGE Although the alveolar macrophage has been implicated as the most vital mechanism for protecting the lungs from damage by microorganisms, very few studies of the function of this cell have been published. Human alveolar macrophages were lavaged from surgically resected lungs and also from lungs of normal subjects. Cells that had been purified by adherence to glass were maintained by tissue culture for as long as 54 days. After three to four weeks *in vitro*, transformation into multinucleated giant cells was apparent, at which time the cells had more than 30 times the phagocytic capacity than after one day *in vitro*. Phagocytosis of heat-killed *Candida albicans* was inhibited by: iodoacetate, sodium fluoride, potassium cyanide, and low partial pressures of oxygen; ancillary evidence suggests that these cells need both oxidative and glycolytic energy sources for optimal particle ingestion. Alveolar macrophages killed *Listeria monocytogenes*, as did monocyte-derived macrophages in a similarly efficient manner, but neutrophils were more efficient than either. Clearing of bacteria is probably not dependent upon myeloperoxidase in the monocyte-derived macrophage or in the alveolar macrophage, since histochemical staining for peroxidase was negative. During four hours of observation, *C. albicans* blastospores were killed by neutrophils and monocytes containing myeloperoxidase, but not by human alveolar macrophages. Large cells with supernormal phagocytic capacity were recovered from patients who had acute pneumonia of infectious origin. This suggests that disease alter macrophage function. Human alveolar macrophages are unique phagocytes, in that they depend on an environmental P_{O_2} greater than 25 torr for maximal activity. A P_{CO_2} as high as 70 torr did not alter this function when the pH was constant. These data suggest that patients with chronic bronchitis or atelectasis may have suboptimal macrophage action in areas of the lung where P_{O_2} is abnormally low. Since bronchial clearance of particulate matter is impaired and the lower respiratory tract is frequently infected, defense of the lungs by macrophages assumes an important role in the clinical course of chronic infection. (Cohen, A. B., and Cline, M. J.: *The Human Alveolar Macrophage: Isolation, Cultivation in Vitro, and Studies of Morphologic and Functional Characteristics*, *J. Clin. Invest.* 50:1390, 1971.)