



Immune System Dysregulation Due to Chronic Exposure to Airborne Toxins: A Public Health Concern

Kavita Sharma

Department of Zoology, Government Degree College Agra Cantt Agra, U.P. India

drkavitazoology@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Long-term exposure to aerial pollutants like particulate matter (PM), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), sulphur dioxide (SO₂), and ozone (O₃) may seriously weaken the immune system, triggering respiratory illnesses, susceptibility to infections, and autoimmune diseases. Such contaminants disrupt the immune cells, such as macrophages, dendritic cells, and T-cells, leading to continuous inflammation and immune tolerance. There can be synergistic effects upon the combination of these toxins hence increasing the risk to health. The paper has identified that effective control measures against air pollution, especially in urban environments, are necessary to safeguard immune health and avoid unfortunate consequences.

Introduction

With the modern urban and industrial arrangement prevailing in the modern world, air pollution has become a threatening and imminent hazard to the civic health of the globe at large since it affects mostly the human immune system. Air pollution was named by the World Health Organization one of the main environmental threats to health, and the scope of air pollution effects on human health is really enormous since it may cause or participate in the development of a vast number of diseases (Andersen, 2012; Ibrahim *et al.*, 2022). Air, water, soil environmental pollution, in general, is known to cause a multiplicity of undesirable health effects in humans, with air pollution being able to damage literally every single organ system and causing

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the acute and chronic respiratory and cardiovascular diseases (Nishida & Yatera, 2022). A complex mixture of particles and gases, these air pollutants which are quantified as any ambient substances that could possibly end up causing damages to human beings, animals, plants, or materials can achieve harmful concentrations, both outdoors and indoors (Roberts, 2020). Such pollutants could be either natural (volcanic eruptions and forest fires) or industrial (industrial uses and car emissions) (Samad *et al.*, 2024). Since toxicants are in the air, in the case of their inhalation, an inflammatory process will arise in the respiratory system, which can be modified into a systemic inflammatory process, distant target organs and tissues may be affected. Chronic exposure to particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, and ozone (O₃) are some of the pollutants that can puncture the immune system such that it becomes either overregulated or underregulated and in turn lead into vulnerability of diseases (Chen & Kan, 2008).

Background of the Study

It is a complex system of the immune system, the role of which is to ensure that the body is sufficiently defended against heterogeneity of external aggression, and that becomes increasingly malfunctioning in the conditions of ubiquity of air pollution agents and leads to a domino effect of adverse health outcomes, which are not limited to the respiratory tract (Chung *et al.*, 2023). It is a more severe instance of the disruption of immune homeostasis that emerges due to prolonged exposure to such environmental aggressions as particulate matter with a diameter of 2.5 micrometers or less (PM 2.5), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), sulphur dioxide (SO₂), and ozone and leads to the development of both acute and chronic pathologies (Domingo & Rovira, 2020; Vito *et al.*, 2024). The relevant exposure levels are just mind boggling in the sense that each liter of air could have over 10 million particulates and a whole zoo of poisonous gases which in their turn assault an epithelial surface area of the lung of the order of 100 square meters or so with an air-blood barrier that is hardly 0.1 -m thick (Chang *et al.*, 2010). Such pollutants are largely irritants that achieve their oxidative stress and inflammatory potential when deposited in the deep lung and cause respiratory diseases, autoimmune diseases and even cardiovascular diseases (Chang *et al.*, 2010).

Purpose of the Study

- Discuss how air pollution affects the malfunctioning of the immune system.
- Discover how pollutants interfere with the immune cells.
- Explore synergistic interactions of multi-airborne toxins on immune-dysregulation.
- Recommend air pollution reduction measures and safeguarding of the population health.

Material and Methodology

It is also an experimental as well as an epidemiological study so as to establish the importance of airborne toxins in malfunctioning of the immune system.

- **Experimental Design:** Benchtop laboratory studies were done and the stated levels of air toxins i.e., particulate matter (PM), NO₂, SO₂, and O₃ were subjected to animal models. The identification of the markers of the inflammation and immune cell activities in blood and lung tissues based on which the immunological effects were identified.
- **Epidemiological Analysis:** The categories of the population of the citizens of the most polluted places were monitored and the findings were noted down so as to determine the association between the quality of air and the morbidity rates of the respiratory apparatus diseases and the autoimmune diseases.
- **Statistical Methods:** Regression models were applied in development of the relation between the exposure of air pollution and the markers of the immune system, and the prevalence of the associated diseases.

Table 1: Study Approach Overview

Methodology Type	Description
Experimental Design	Benchtop laboratory studies with animal models and air toxin exposure.
Epidemiological Analysis	Monitoring of populations in highly polluted areas to assess disease morbidity.
Statistical Methods	Regression models to relate air pollution exposure to immune system markers and disease prevalence.

This table provides a summary of the research methods used, including the experimental design, epidemiological analysis, and statistical methods applied in the study.

Results and Discussion

Indeed, a chronic exposure of air toxins had caused a massive dysregulation of the immune system of the animal models as indeed demonstrated in the experiment. The inflammatory markers including the concentration of cytokines were also elevated showing that the pollutants had induced an immune response. The exposure of the immune cell to the pollutants PM, and O was found to activate the immune cell, and make the immune cell inclined to a pro-inflammatory phenotype. In the course of the epidemiological investigation, the residents of the locations, which exceeded the air pollution norms, displayed gigantic rates

of respiratory diseases, both asthma and COPD, and autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis. This information gives grounds to suspect that the regular contacts with air toxins not only enhance the appearance of the risks of respiratory diseases, but also trigger the occurrence of chronic inflammatory diseases and autoimmune syndromes.

Table 2: Research Outcomes Summary

Findings	Details
Increased Inflammation	Elevated cytokine levels indicate an immune response triggered by pollutants.
Immune Cell Activation	Exposure to PM and O ₃ activated immune cells, causing pro-inflammatory phenotype.
Higher Morbidity Rates	Residents in highly polluted areas exhibited higher rates of asthma, COPD, and autoimmune diseases.

Table 2. highlights the key findings of the study, including the observed effects of air pollution on the immune system, such as inflammation, immune cell activation, and the higher incidence of respiratory and autoimmune diseases.

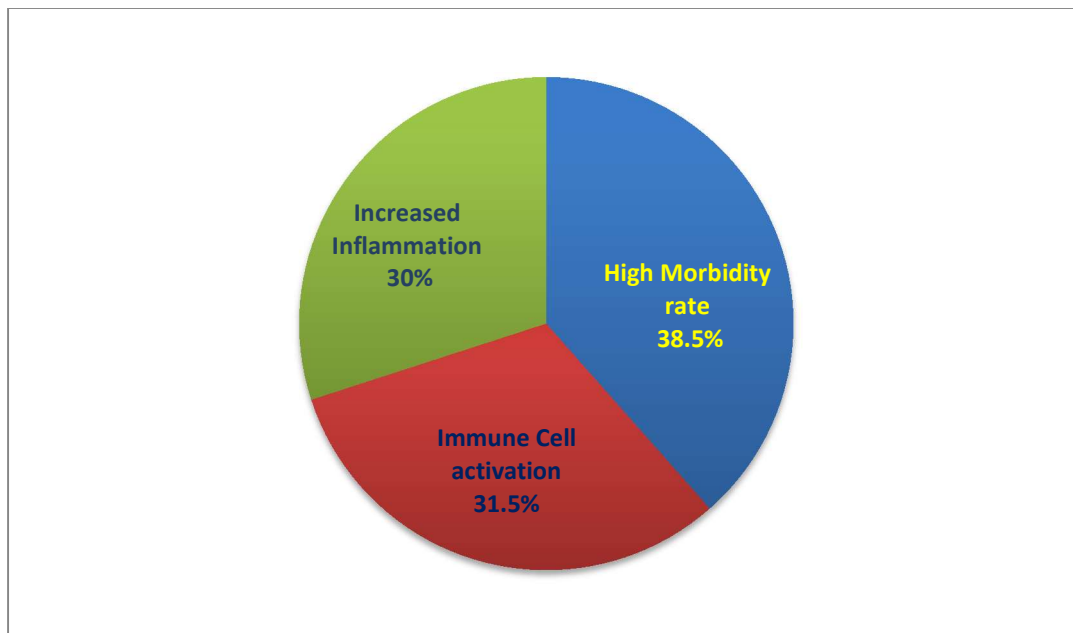


Figure 1. Inflammatory response of air pollutants

The pie chart illustrates the proportion of description length dedicated to different topics in the results section. It shows that "Higher Morbidity Rates" makes up 38.5%, "Increased Inflammation" accounts for 30.0%, and "Immune Cell Activation" comprises 31.5% of the section. This breakdown highlights the focus areas within the analysis.

The air pollutants are of great worry to the wellbeing of the human health after they were found to alter the immunological functioning of the body thereby causing different health conditions. PM and PM 2.5, especially, are known to be directly toxic to immune cells that live in the lungs, causing their local inflammation and immune stimulation (Sharma, K. 2024, Domingo & Rovira, 2020). The lung evades their defence mechanism because these particles are small, which allows them to enter the bloodstream and produce a whole-body inflammatory effect (Crinnion, 2017). NO₂ and SO₂ which are such common products of car emissions and industrial processes have been proposed to be linked with the high morbidity of respiratory infections as well as the diminished capability of the immune response (Bronte *et al.*, 2023). Ozone at the ground level is a very toxic oxidizing agent, which has also been found to damage the effectiveness of the major immune cells, such as macrophages, and T-cells, which are the primary elements of the body defence mechanisms (Vito *et al.*, 2024).

Table 3: Comparative Impact of Toxins on Immune Cells

Pollutant	Targeted Immune Cells	Molecular Change	Clinical Outcome
PM2.5	Alveolar Macrophages, B-cells	Endocytosis; increases mtDNA copy number; induces IL-1 β & TNF- α	Systemic inflammation, coronary artery disease, autoimmune flares
Ozone (O₃)	Epithelial Cells, Neutrophils	Lipid peroxidation; decreases mtDNA copy number; suppresses bone marrow	Airway hyper-responsiveness, increased viral susceptibility (e.g., COVID-19)
NO₂	Monocytes, Th17 Cells	Increases IL-17 levels; promotes oxidative stress-related cytokine signaling	Exacerbation of Psoriasis and Rheumatoid Arthritis
Heavy Metals (Pb, Cd)	T-cells, Dendritic Cells	DNA methylation; histone modification (e.g., H3K9ac, H4K20me1)	Immunotoxicity, vaccine resistance, and developmental neuro-deficits



Repeated intoxication with this multi-constituent combination of contaminations can lead to the dysregulation of the immune system that is the predecessor of the subsequent development of chronic inflammation, autoimmunity and disabling respiratory diseases, including asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (Pshybelsky *et al.*, 2018).

Study Limitations

One rather evident limitation of translating the results to the human setup is the animal models (Shi *et al.*, 2018). The consequence of such species difference that are related to physiology, genetics, behaviour and pharmacokinetics can result in an enormous barrier in the predictability of animal research even in the efforts to refine the research (Akhtar, 2015). Mechanistic studies are extensively carried out with the help of animal models, which, however, never succeed in an immaculate recapitulation of the light of human immune responses mainly because of certain differences in genetic, phenotypic and physiologic compositions (Tissue-Engineered Disease Models, 2018).

Future Scope

The problem of long-term effects of chronic intoxication with high concentration of air toxins and the ultimate fate of such a load on the beautiful game of human immune system in various population groups should be focused as the new research activities. The research studies on the charlatanism should possess longitudinal research studies where the methodological investigation on the strict surveillance of the studied subjects over the years should come about with the cumulative impacts of the prolonged air pollution to acquire meticulous care to the health secrets (Andersen, 2012). These studies need to feature the newest practices of bio monitoring, thanks to which the extent of the exposure could be identified accurately and which air toxins produce the most detrimental effect on immune systems could be identified (Samet, 2020).

Conclusion

The long-term exposure to aero toxins is a staggering affair as far as civic health is under discussion and the repercussions to the immune system are enormous. The paper has been able to define that pollutants such as particulate matter, nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide and ozone among others lead to immune dysregulation resulting into several health complications, among them being respiratory diseases as well as autoimmune diseases. The above effects are even compounded by synergistic effects of different pollutants therefore there is need to develop tighter regulations of air quality. To protect the health of the populations immense campaign ought to be developed to reduce air toxics and the toxic load they are placing upon the immune system.



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