

Chapter 22

Gerosuppressive and Senolytic Nutrients



Jan O. Nehlin

Abstract The aging process is intimately regulated by the contribution of interactions between genetic, epigenetic and environmental factors. Every individual is distinguished by a specific personal lifestyle, since conception, that influences the state of health, either leading to the preservation of a good state of health or accelerated aging trajectories that could hasten the occurrence of disease. The intake of specific nutritional factors, investigated in large epidemiological studies, have long been considered associated with specific health outcomes and prevention of health problems. As a result of the aging process, the occurrence of senescent cells within the body can cause damage to organs and tissues leading to many age-associated pathologies. The advent of the nutritional geroscience field is contributing to reveal how a diverse number of phytochemicals can help to reduce the rate of cell proliferation, enhance cellular function, eradicate senescent cells, or suppress, at varying degrees, their abnormal secretomes, mitigating the extent of damage posed by them in the body. A summary of senotherapeutic biomolecules acting as senolytics and gerosuppressors will be here presented, to strengthen our knowledge that natural compounds present in the diet, when given at the right time, at the right dose and in combination, could extend the duration of health span and the overall lifespan.

Keywords Health · Disease · Aging · Senescence · Gerosuppressor · Senolytic

22.1 Introduction

Since conception, humans are exposed to a nutritional environment that will shape their future health trajectories, during all their lifetimes. The interplay between nutritional lifestyle, parental epigenetic factors, and inherited gene variants will determine how well the body will function and cope with all the stresses that will be confronted with time.

J. O. Nehlin (✉)

Department of Clinical Research, Copenhagen University Hospital Amager and Hvidovre-Copenhagen, Kettegård Alle 30, 2650 Hvidovre, Denmark
e-mail: jan.nehlin@regionh.dk

Traditional medicine, through thousands of years of experience, has contributed to unravel the identities of natural products that could have a role in preserving health, mitigating symptoms of disease, accelerated healing, and general well-being (Mukherjee et al. 2017; Wang et al. 2018). The chemical identification of the active ingredients with both beneficial and detrimental roles has been ongoing for decades.

The health benefits of Mediterranean and Asian diets have been confirmed in many clinical trials and epidemiological surveys. These diets are characterized by several features, including low meat consumption, fish consumption, the intake of oils instead of fats as lipid sources, moderate amounts of red wine, and significant amounts of fresh fruit and vegetables. Polyphenols have been shown to have multiple health effects as demonstrated by several relevant population studies and clinical trials (Leri et al. 2020; Cannataro et al. 2021; Shen et al. 2017; Gensous et al. 2020; Quach et al. 2017). The cellular mechanisms by which polyphenols exert their function has been recently reviewed (Russo et al. 2020; Mansoori et al. 2021; Jantan et al. 2021) as well as the role of polyphenols against aging and cancer (Bian et al. 2020; Russo et al. 2020).

The role of the microbiota needs to be highlighted in relation to healthy aging, because it is intimately associated with the specific intake of nutrients, and long-term health consequences (Fragkou et al. 2021, Tavella et al. 2021), as well as parameters such as eating time (Taetzsch et al. 2021).

22.2 General Considerations

Senescent cells arise in the body during development, stress, disease and aging (Childs et al. 2017). Several mechanisms can lead to senescence including replicative senescence (RS), stress-induced senescence (SIPS), oncogene-induced senescence (OIS), mitochondrial dysfunction-associated senescence (MiDAS), and many more (Di Micco et al. 2021; Calcinotto et al. 2019).

The immune system targets senescent cells that harbor damage that could pose a potential risk if allowed to bypass the senescent state (Prata et al. 2018, Kale et al. 2020). However, with time, immune function gradually decays giving rise to immunosenescence. The immune cells responsible for targeting and eliminating senescent cells become reduced in number and function, thereby allowing senescent cells to accumulate in the body (Rodrigues et al. 2021, Prata et al. 2018, Kale et al. 2020). The accumulation of senescent cells results in the characteristic low-grade chronic inflammation that is associated with age, which causes organ dysfunction (Childs et al. 2017; Furman et al. 2019).

Aging is a universal living condition that is accompanied by an increased risk of age-associated diseases, all of which are gathered under the concept of geriatric syndrome. The World Health Organization (WHO) has categorized senescence as a significant risk factor behind the origin of older age diseases (Code MG2A: Old age; International Classification of Diseases (ICD) 11th (June 2018). Senolytics (see

Sects. 22.3 and 22.4) are considered an aid to prolong the state of disease-free lifetime in people (Khaltourina et al. 2020).

22.3 Definitions and Classification of Senotherapeutics

Senotherapeutics or gerotherapeutics are compounds, medicines or protocols that exert senotherapy, an intervention targeting senescent cells, being considered an emerging strategy for the extension of health span, and prevention or treatment of age-associated diseases. At present, senotherapeutics can be classified in:

(1) Senolytics; (2) Gerosuppressors (SASP modulators or inhibitors); (3) Gero-protectors; (4) Epigenetic modifiers; (5) Gene therapeutics

The first four classes of senotherapeutics include nutritional components, whereas gene therapy strategies are mostly aimed at editing genes that might predispose to accelerated aging, less successful aging and even, enhance polymorphic variants to increase the length of health span, postpone the appearance of aging-associated diseases and extend lifespan.

The present work will consider the nutritional aspects involved in aging and focus on those compounds that exhibit senolytic and gerosuppressive functions. The nutritional geroscience field aims for the identification and characterization of nutritional compounds that have an effect on the function and/or viability of senescent cells, as well as health promoting activities that reduce or postpone the genesis of senescence. Some recent works have presented a list of senotherapeutics that are either in the discovery phase or are at different stages of clinical trials (Prasanna et al. 2021; Kirkland and Tchkonina 2020; Paez-Ribes et al. 2019; Morsli and Bellantuono 2021; Short et al. 2019).

22.4 Senolytics

Senolytics are defined as a new class of drugs that selectively kill senescent cells. They comprise small molecules that specifically induce cell death in senescent cells, targeting a number of targets including survival pathways and anti-apoptotic mechanisms (Zhu et al. 2015; Yosef et al. 2016). Several recent reviews have dealt with the topic of senolytic compounds (Kirkland and Tchkonina 2020; Martel et al. 2020; Robbins et al. 2021; Short et al. 2019).

Most studies on senolytics so far have focused on the effects of senescent cell eradicators in cell culture and mice studies. Such studies have rendered a great deal of knowledge as regards the specificity and extent of senolytic compounds on the alleviation of the senescent cell burden on specific tissues and their corresponding pathologies, including idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (Justice et al. 2019), renal fibrosis post-acute kidney injury (Li et al. 2021), diabetic kidney disease (Hickson et al. 2019), eye age-macular degeneration (Lee et al. 2021), bone loss (Farr et al. 2017; Chandra

et al. 2020), cardiac ischemia–reperfusion injury (Dookun et al. 2020b), cardiovascular disease (Dookun et al. 2020a, Song et al. 2020), osteoarthritis (Dai et al. 2020; Jeon et al. 2017), diabetes (Palmer et al. 2021, Thompson et al. 2019), cognitive decline (Bussian et al. 2018), uterine fibrosis (Cavalcante et al. 2020), cancer (Picallos-Rabina et al. 2020), frailty (Xu et al. 2018), etc. The first documented study to report the elimination of senescent cells in vivo in humans by senolytics was the report by Justice et al., in idiopathic pulmonary disease (Justice et al. 2019).

Many ongoing pre-clinical and clinical trials (Kirkland and Tchkonja 2020; Prasanna et al. 2021) will provide unequivocal evidence of the role of senolytics in a variety of human aging-associated diseases (Childs et al. 2017).

Several phytochemicals belonging to the flavonoid family have been documented to exhibit potent senolytic activities (Yousefzadeh et al. 2018). A list of foods describing their flavonoid contents and amounts is available (Haytowitz et al. 2018). Early epidemiological studies already showed that the intake of foods containing flavonoids such as quercetin, kaempferol, myricetin, apigenin, and luteolin, was significantly inversely associated with mortality from coronary heart disease (Hertog et al. 1993).

Many senolytics can upregulate SIRT1 activity, a sirtuin that belongs to the family of class III histone deacetylases, whose enzymatic activity is dependent on NAD⁺. SIRT1 is implicated in the cellular response to caloric restriction and lifespan extension (Iside et al. 2020). Several natural compounds that activate the Nrf2 (nuclear factor erythroid-derived 2-related factor 2) pathway, controlling the cellular response to stress caused by reactive oxygen species (ROS), have been found to be senolytic (Malavolta et al. 2018).

While senolytics seem to be very promising compounds, there are concerns as regards their possible side effects or disadvantages, if their administration exceeds specific concentrations, and duration, and whether the recipient suffers or not from an age-associated disease (Martin et al. 2021, Raffaele et al. 2021). For such reasons, the National Institute on Aging, USA, has called for standardization in the investigations and measures regarding senotherapeutic use, including reports on the balance between senolytic and cytotoxic effects, markers of specific senescent cell types linked to the specific interventions, interactions with coexisting diseases and their effects at various ages, especially in older people (Romashkan et al. 2021).

Senolytics can be classified as being of nutritional origin or pharmaceutical origin. Both classes will be addressed in this summary, with focus on senolytics from natural sources.

22.4.1 Nutritional Senolytics

Nutritional senolytics are compounds that originate from natural sources and exhibit senolytic activity. The most studied nutritional senolytics are presented, but the list is likely to grow further as more research will reveal whether known or novel polyphenols possess senolytic activities.

Below, a list of prominent, well-documented, nutritional senolytic compounds (in alphabetical order) aims to describe their origin, targets and possible uses in senotherapy.

22.4.1.1 Allicin

Allicin (diallyl thiosulfinate) is a volatile sulfur compound present in garlic (*Allium sativum*), a vegetable with multiple health effects (Borlinghaus et al. 2021). The health-promoting and disease-preventing effects of garlic on many human common diseases, such as cancer, cardiovascular and metabolic disorders, blood pressure, and diabetes, through its antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and lipid-lowering properties, have been documented in vitro, in vivo, and clinical studies (Ansary et al. 2020). Allicin has antiproliferative, anticlonogenic, and senolytic effects. In addition, allicin decreased cell viability and induced apoptosis by loss of $\Delta\Psi_m$, caspase-3, caspase-8, and caspase-9 activation, upregulation of NOXA, P21, and BAK, as well as down-regulation of BCL-XL expression in breast cancer cell lines (Rosas-Gonzalez et al. 2020).

22.4.1.2 Curcumin and Curcumin Analogues

Curcumin is a yellow polyphenolic pigment from the turmeric (*Curcuma longa L.*) rhizome that has traditionally been used in culinary and food coloring, and as an ingredient in Ayurveda and Chinese medicine health promotion and disease prevention (Sharifi-Rad et al. 2020). Numerous studies suggest that curcumin has some health benefits in delaying aging and may be useful in preventing and treating age-related diseases (Cherif et al. 2019, Zia et al. 2021; Sharifi-Rad et al. 2020; Bielak-Zmijewska et al. 2019). Curcumin has been shown to have senolytic activity (Yousefzadeh et al. 2018). Among four commonly used curcumin analogs, EF24, HO-3867, 2-HBA and dimethoxycurcumin (DIMC), EF24 is the most potent and broad-spectrum senolytic agent. EF24 exerts selective lysis of senescent cells through the induction of apoptosis in a reactive oxygen species (ROS) production independent manner but associated with an increase in the proteasome degradation of the Bcl-2 anti-apoptotic protein family proteins known to play an important role in protecting senescent cells from apoptosis (Li et al. 2019).

22.4.1.3 Fisetin

Fisetin, with the chemical name 2-(3,4-Dihydroxyphenyl)-3,7-dihydroxy-4H-1-benzopyran-4-one, a flavonol, is a secondary metabolite of many plants, occurring in their green parts, fruits, as well as in barks and hardwood, that has anti-inflammatory, chemopreventive, chemotherapeutic and recently also senotherapeutic roles. Fisetin is present in strawberries, apples, persimmons, grapes, onions, kiwi, kale, nuts, smoke

tree (*Cotinus coggygia*), etc. (Gryniewicz and Demchuk 2019; Mehta et al. 2018) and influences many cellular pathways (Kashyap et al. 2019). Fisetin is considered a senolytic because it was found to selectively induce apoptosis in senescent but not proliferating human umbilical vein endothelial cells. However, it was not shown to be a senolytic in a senescent human lung fibroblast strain, or primary human preadipocytes (Zhu et al. 2017). Fisetin was found to be the most potent senolytic in a panel of ten flavonoid polyphenols using senescent mouse and human cells. Moreover, when given to wild-type mice late in life, fisetin restored tissue homeostasis, reduced age-related pathologies, and extended median and maximum lifespan (Yousefzadeh et al. 2018). Fisetin is one of the senolytics that has been shown to have toxic effects when administered in high doses (200 μ M) in rat, inducing mitochondrial pro-oxidant activity (Constantin et al. 2011). Fisetin has other side effects such as the promotion of hair growth by activation of telomerase reverse transcriptase (TERT) expression in skin hair follicle bulge stem cells (Kubo et al. 2020). A summary of the in vivo evidence for fisetin targeting multiple age-associated dysfunctions and pathologies in mammals has been presented (Morsli and Bellantuono 2021).

22.4.1.4 Luteolin

Luteolin, with the chemical name 2-(3,4-Dihydroxyphenyl)-5,7-dihydroxy-4-chromenone, is a flavone, subclass of flavonoids, which is found in many vegetables, spices, fruits and medicinal herbs. It has many health benefits, and appears especially suited to alleviate the symptoms of glycolipid metabolism disorders such as insulin resistance, diabetes, and obesity (Wang et al. 2021). It was shown to have weak senolytic activity, in a comparative study with other flavonoids (see 4.1.3) (Yousefzadeh et al. 2018) but it has powerful anti-inflammatory actions in concert with IL-37 and IL-38 interleukins (Conti et al. 2021). Luteolin diminishes human neutrophil inflammatory responses by inhibiting Raf1-MEK-1-Erk, significantly inhibited superoxide anion generation, ROS production, and neutrophil extracellular trap (NET) formation in human neutrophils. The increase in elastase release, CD11b expression, and chemotaxis was also inhibited by luteolin (Yang et al. 2018). Apart from being anti-oxidative and anti-inflammatory, luteolin plays an important role in defending plants, for example against UV radiation, suggesting it could be useful in skin protection against UV-induced photoaging (Gendrisch et al. 2020).

22.4.1.5 Ortho-Vanillin

ortho-Vanillin (o-Vanillin; 2-hydroxy-3-methoxybenzaldehyde) is an organic solid present in the extracts and essential oils of many plants. o-Vanillin is an isomer of meta-Vanillin, a phenolic aldehyde.

Vanillin (4-hydroxy-3-methoxybenzaldehyde) that is a major component of the bean and pod of some plant species of the *Vanilla* genus, and is also synthesized on a

large scale for use as a flavoring agent in food, fragrance and pharmaceutical industries. Vanillin exhibits antioxidant, antimicrobial, analgesic, anti-carcinogenic, anti-mutagenic and anti-sickling biological effects (Marton et al. 2016). o-Vanillin cleared senescent intervertebral disc (IVD) cells and reduced the senescence-associated secretory phenotype (SASP) (see Sect. 22.5) associated with inflammation and back pain. It also increased metabolic activity, caspase 3/7 activity, and apoptosis in cells from degenerate IVDs, but not in cells from non-mildly-degenerate IVDs (Cherif et al. 2019). o-vanillin exerts its actions through increased pro-apoptotic pathways and reduction of expression of senescence-associated genes. (Cherif et al. 2020). The vanillin analogues o-vanillin and 2,4,6- trihydroxybenzaldehyde were also shown to be cytotoxic against cultured human melanoma A375 cells, and are therefore being evaluated as potential anticancer drugs (Marton et al. 2016).

22.4.1.6 Piperlongumine

Long pepper (*Piper longum L.*), commonly known as “Pippali”, is a pepper plant found in India and southeast Asia, that contains a vast number of health promoting compounds. Piperine and piperlongumine are its two major piperidone alkaloids (Yadav et al. 2020). Piperlongumine (also called piplartine or piperlongumin) has many pharmacological activities and is commonly used in Ayurvedic medicine (Bezerra et al. 2013). Piperlongumine has been shown to exert senolytic activity (Wang et al. 2016) with at least 172 different senolytic targets. One of them is oxidation resistance 1 (OXR1), an important antioxidant protein that regulates the expression of a variety of antioxidant enzymes and provides senescent cells with high resistance to oxidative stress. Piperlongumine induced OXR1 degradation through the ubiquitin–proteasome system in a senescent cell-specific manner (Zhang et al. 2018). Among other relevant targets, piperlongumine can also bind to annexin A1 (ANXA1), an endogenous anti-inflammatory mediator with therapeutic potential in cancer (Henrique et al. 2020).

22.4.1.7 Quercetin

Quercetin is a polyphenolic flavonoid, chemically known as 2-(3,4-dihydroxyphenyl)-3,5,7-trihydroxychromen-4-one, that is enriched in apples, berries, broccoli, cabbage, capers, cauliflower, cherries, citrus fruits, coriander, honey, nuts, red onions, tea, etc. (Batiha et al. 2020).

Quercetin was the first nutritional compound shown to have senolytic activity, and it was most effective against senescent human endothelial cells and mouse bone marrow mesenchymal stem cells. Quercetin was found to lack senolytic efficacy in senescent preadipocytes and mouse embryonic fibroblasts, but when combined with the anticancer drug Dasatinib, it was shown to be effective as senolytic in several types of senescent cells (Zhu et al. 2015).

In animal models, a senolytic cocktail of Dasatinib and quercetin (see also Sect. 22.4.2), which caused the elimination of senescent cells from adipose tissue, resulted in improved physical function and lifespan extension (Xu et al. 2018).

A clinical trial of Quercetin (Q) and Dasatinib (D) (a pharmaceutical senolytic; see Sect. 22.4.2) reduced the senescence burden in individuals with diabetic kidney disease (Hickson et al. 2019). Quercetin together with fisetin are considered as potentially useful adjuvants chemotherapeutic agents in the treatment of cancers, in view of their roles in modulating many cancer signalling pathways (Kashyap et al. 2019). The senolytic drug combination, D+Q, is known to reduce senescent cell abundance in aged mice, extending lifespan (Xu et al. 2018). D+Q senolytic treatment also has been shown to reduce intestinal senescence and inflammation while altering specific microbiota signatures (Saccon et al. 2021). A summary of the in vivo evidence of D+Q targeting multiple age-associated dysfunctions and pathologies in mammals, has been presented (Morsli and Bellantuono 2021).

22.4.1.8 Sulforaphane

The isothiocyanate sulforaphane (SF) is one of the most potent naturally occurring Phase 2 enzymes inducers derived from *Brassica* vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, brussel sprouts, etc. (Yuanfeng et al. 2021). Sulforaphane-induced cell cycle arrest, senescence by upregulation of cell cycle inhibitors p21 and p27, DNA hypomethylation and changes in microRNA profile in breast cancer cells (Lewinska et al. 2017). Another compound from cruciferous vegetables, Phenethyl isothiocyanate (PEITC) modulates the senescence effectors p16, p53, and p21, and induces increased staining of senescence-associated SA- β -Gal senescence biomarker (Malavolta et al. 2018).

22.4.1.9 Other Senolytic Compounds Based on Natural Products

Novel senolytic compounds were searched from natural products using chemoinformatic tools. Hinokitiol found in the roots of the Hinoki tree, preussomerin C from the *Lasiodiplodia theobromae* fungus, and tanshinone from *Salvia miltiorrhiza* Bunge roots, could be considered senolytic compound candidates since they share similarities in structure with senolytic leads such as tunicamycin, ginsenoside Rb1, ABT-737, rapamycin, navitoclax, timosaponin A-III, digoxin, roxithromycin, and azithromycin, and targets involved in senescence pathways with potential use in the treatment of age-related diseases (Barrera-Vazquez et al. 2021). An extract from the plant *Solidago virgaurea subsp. alpestris*, also known as goldenrod, is traditionally used as an anti-inflammatory herbal medicine, and was shown to exhibit weak senolytic activity (Lammermann et al. 2018).

Triptolide (TPL) is a diterpenoid extracted from the plant, *Tripterygium wilfordii* Hook F, which is a traditional Chinese medicinal herb. Bioactive TPL showed immunosuppressive, anti-fertility and anti-cystogenesis activities. TPL accelerated liver cancer cell line HepG2 cell senescence by regulating the AKT pathway. TPL

could also enhance cellular senescence and inhibit tumor growth by negatively regulating human telomerase reverse transcriptase (hTERT) signaling pathway (Li et al. 2017).

Senotherapeutics have also been identified in marine dietary algae such as (2R*, 3S*, 6R*, 7S*, 10R*, 13R*)-7,13-Dihydroxy-2,6-cyclo-1(9),14-xenicadiene-18,19-dial derived from *Dilophus fasciola*, Laurendecumenyne A from *Laurencia decumbens* and 4-Bromo-3-ethyl-9-[(2E)-2-penten-4-yn-1-yl]-2,8-dioxabicyclo[5.2.1]decan-6-ol from *Laurencia sp.* to be potent inhibitors of multiple target senescent-cell anti-apoptotic pathway proteins (Salekeen et al. 2021).

22.4.2 *Pharmaceutical Senolytics*

Pharmaceutical senolytics are compounds that have been chemically synthesized and that, originally, were used as experimental cancer drugs. Cancer cells avoid apoptosis and can undergo tumorigenesis, in part by upregulation of pro-survival proteins of the Bcl-2 protein family (Bcl-2, Bcl-XL, Bcl-w, Mcl-1, and A1). Upon further investigation, some of the cancer drugs were found to target senescent cells in tumors, such as navitoclax (previously called ABT-263) that targets Bcl-2, Bcl-xl, and Bcl-w (Zhu et al. 2016; Prasanna et al. 2021). Combinations of pharmaceutical senolytics (e.g. Dasatinib) and nutritional senolytics (e.g. quercetin) have proven very effective in anti-senescent cell elimination (Saccon et al. 2021; Morsli and Bellantuono 2021). These findings have triggered further work to try to repurpose other existing pharmaceuticals to target aging pathways (Vaiserman et al. 2021).

Since pharmaceutical senolytics are drugs, that are not present in nutrients or foods, they will not be addressed specifically in this chapter.

22.4.3 *Other Senolytic Strategies*

The present work is focused exclusively on nutritional factors affecting senescent cells, however, many non-nutritional approaches are being considered as well, to influence and/or eradicate senescent cells. Examples include exercise (Chen et al. 2021b), fibrates (Nogueira-Recalde et al. 2019), hyperbaric oxygen therapy (Hachmo et al. 2020), chemically-based prodrugs such as a non-toxic derivative of the compound 5-Fluorouridine, a senescence-specific killing compound 1 (SSK1) derived from the drug gemcitabine targeting lysosomal beta-galactosidase (Cai et al. 2020), galactose-modified cytotoxic prodrugs such as Duocarmycin (Guerero et al. 2020), cardiac glycosides targeting the Na⁺/K⁺ ATPase pump such as digoxin, in combination with senogenic compounds Gemcitabine or Doxorubicin (Triana-Martinez et al. 2019; Martin et al. 2020), inhibitors of the HSP90 chaperone family such as 17-Dimethylaminoethylamino-17-demethoxygeldanamycin (17-DMAG) (Fuhrmann-Stroissnigg et al. 2017), a FOXO4 peptide that perturbs

the FOXO4 interaction with p53 (Baar et al. 2017), CD153 vaccination to remove senescent T cells (Yoshida et al. 2020), etc.

Finally, the role of senescent cell eradication by the immune system (Prata et al. 2018; Kale et al. 2020) and nanomaterial-based delivery systems capable of preferentially killing senescent cells (nano-senolytics) and/or modulating their proinflammatory secretome (nano-senomorphics/nano-senostatics) are areas of active research (Adamczyk-Grochala and Lewinska 2020).

22.5 Gerosuppressors and Senomorphics

Gerosuppressors, also called senomorphics, are compounds or biomedical strategies that suppress, ameliorate, prevent or reverse the senescent state, inhibiting or reducing senescence-inducing triggers such as telomere damage, stress-induced senescence and gene-induced senescence (Martel et al. 2020). Senescent cells exhibit a characteristic secretory profile. This specific secretome is being currently referred to as the “Senescence-associated secretory phenotype” or SASP (Coppe et al. 2008; Kuilman and Peepers 2009). Many different types of compounds and strategies can inhibit or modulate the SASP, including medicines such as statins (Liu et al. 2015), glucocorticoids (Lagerge et al. 2012), JAK1/2 inhibitors such as Ruxolitinib (Xu et al. 2015), NF- κ B, p38 MAP kinase and MK2 kinase inhibitors (Alimbetov et al. 2016), splicing factor PTBP1 depletion (Georgilis et al. 2018), transgenic cells seeking IL-6 producing senescent cells (Quadrat et al. 2017), etc. Several senomorphic molecules, at an early characterization stage, have been recently presented (Mongelli et al. 2020).

The SASP is important to study because it is the origin of the heightened pro-inflammatory environment normally found in aged people. Thus, senotherapeutics targeting or modulating the SASP are emerging as alternative therapies to the senolytics (Birch and Gil 2020).

The SASP has been found to be senescence-process specific and cell-type specific, which means that no individual senescent cell would show the exact same secretome profile and the secretome changes over time (Basisty et al. 2020; Schafer et al. 2020).

The senolytic compounds described in Sect. 22.4 can also exert modulation of SASP, to various degrees, and will not be addressed in this section, as their main function is to have senolytic activity.

Below, a list of prominent nutritional gerosuppressors (in alphabetical order) aims to describe their origin, targets and possible uses in senotherapy.

22.5.1 Apigenin

Apigenin (4',5,7,-trihydroxyflavone) is a flavonoid found in certain herbs, fruits, and vegetables (Cannataro et al. 2021; Jantan et al. 2021). Apigenin has multiple health-promoting effects and therapeutic functions (Salehi et al. 2019; Jantan et al. 2021). It

can inhibit UV-induced cytotoxicity and prevent signs of skin aging in vivo (Choi et al. 2016), Apigenin can attenuate inflammation, which is associated with many chronic diseases of aging. It was shown to strongly inhibit the secretion of IL-6, a prominent cytokine expressed by senescent cells (Lalberge et al. 2012). Apigenin suppressed the SASP in three human fibroblast strains induced to senescence by ionizing radiation, constitutive MAPK (mitogen-activated protein kinase) signaling, oncogenic RAS, or replicative exhaustion. The mechanism involves suppression of IL-1 α signaling through IRAK1 and IRAK4, p38-MAPK, and NF- κ B. Expression and secretion of one SASP factor, CXCL10 (IP10), was strongly inhibited by apigenin. Apigenin is a promising natural product for reducing the impact of senescent cells on age-related diseases such as cancer (Perrott et al. 2017).

Apigenin is an inhibitor of NAD⁺ase CD38 enzyme (Escande et al. 2013). Declining tissue nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide (NAD) levels are linked to aging and its associated diseases. Pro-inflammatory M1-like macrophages express high levels of the NAD-consuming enzyme CD38 (Covarrubias et al. 2020) and targeting NAD⁺ metabolism has emerged as a potential therapeutic approach to ameliorate aging-related disease (Covarrubias et al. 2021).

22.5.2 *Avenanthramide*

Oats are whole grains that contain several nutrients that modulate directly the innate and adaptive immunity, and indirectly, elicit changes in the gut microbiota and related metabolites (Chen et al. 2021a). One of the oat's nutrients, avenanthramide C (Avn C), was validated as a new senomorphic compound, acting as an inhibitor of SASP and causing a reduction in the levels of markers of senescence. Avn C inhibited the activities of nuclear factor κ B (NF- κ B) and p38 mitogen-activated protein kinase, and the secretion of inflammatory cytokines. Avn C-induced inhibition of the SASP is triggered by senescence-related stress (Lim et al. 2020).

22.5.3 *Epigallocatechin-3-Gallate*

Green tea (*Camellia sinensis* L.) is widely known for its anti-cancer and anti-inflammatory properties. Its main antioxidant agents are catechins and derivatives including epicatechin, epigallocatechin, epicatechin gallate and epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG). EGCG has potent health properties, among which is the prevention of several types of cancer (Musial et al. 2020). EGCG is also present in smaller amounts in fruits like apple and plums, onions, hazelnuts, pecans and carob (Haytowitz et al. 2018). EGCG was able to extend the lifespan in obese rats by improving free fatty acids metabolism and reducing the levels of inflammatory molecules and oxidative stress (Yuan et al. 2020). In 3T3-L1 pre-adipocytes, induced to senescence, EGCG could diminish IL-6 protein expression and CDKN1a

(p21) mRNA expression, and increase mitochondrial SIRT3 and NRF2 mRNA expression. SIRT3 activating compounds, such as EGCG, may delay senescence of cells and senescence-induced inflammatory processes (Lilja et al. 2020). EGCG downregulated the PI3K/Akt/mTOR and AMPK signaling pathway and suppressed ROS, iNOS, Cox-2, NF- κ B, SASP and p53-mediated cell cycle inhibition in pre-adipocytes, and suppressed the accumulation of anti-apoptotic protein Bcl-2 in senescent cells thereby promoting apoptosis-mediated cell death. EGCG acts as an mTOR inhibitor, SASP modulator as well as a potential senolytic agent thereby indicating its multi-faceted attributes that could be useful for developing anti-aging or age-delaying therapies (Kumar et al. 2019).

22.5.4 *Ginsenoside F1*

Ginseng has been used as a traditional herb in Asian countries for thousands of years, and contains a large number of active ingredients including steroidal saponins, protopanaxadiols, and protopanaxatriols, collectively known as ginsenosides (Ratan et al. 2021). Ginsenoside F1 is a ginsenoside found in *Panax* species that grow in the mountainous regions of East Asia. Ginsenoside F1 suppresses the SASP from astrocytes induced by D-galactose via suppressing p38MAPK-dependent NF- κ B activity (Hou et al. 2018).

22.5.5 *Metformin*

Metformin (dimethylbiguanide) has become the preferred first-line oral blood glucose-lowering agent to manage type 2 diabetes. *Galega officinalis* (also known as goat's rue), a traditional herbal medicine in Europe, was found to be rich in guanidine, and shown to lower blood glucose. Guanidine derivatives, including metformin, were synthesized and some (not metformin) were used to treat diabetes in the 1920s and 1930s but were discontinued due to toxicity and the increased availability of insulin (Bailey 2017). Subsequent research led to the discoveries that metformin can improve nutrient sensing, enhance autophagy and intercellular communication, protect against macromolecular damage, delay stem cell aging, modulate mitochondrial function, regulate transcription, and reduce telomere attrition and senescence (Kulkarni et al. 2020). Specifically for aging, metformin leads to decreased insulin levels, decreased IGF-1 signalling, inhibition of mTOR, inhibition of mitochondrial complex 1 in the electron transport chain and reduction of endogenous production of reactive oxygen species (ROS), activation of AMP-activated kinase (AMPK), and reduction in DNA damage (Barzilai et al. 2016) and many more (Morsli and Bellantuono 2021). A large study known as “Targeting aging by metformin” (TAME) is a trial including more than 3000 individuals, ages 65–79, where the effects of metformin on the progression of heart disease, cancer and dementia will be monitored (Kulkarni et al. 2020).

22.5.6 *Puerarin*

Plants from the genus *Pueraria* are well known for the health and cosmetic benefits. The medicinally important plants of this genus are commonly known as kudzu, and the predominant phytochemical constituents are isoflavones, also known as phytoestrogens (Wang et al. 2020).

Puerarin (daidzein-8-C-glucoside) is a major isoflavone found in *Pueraria lobata* (Kudzu, Kuzu, Gegen), an edible legume. It possesses a variety of pharmacological actions (Ahmad et al. 2020, Bharti et al. 2020). Tuber and leaf extracts of *Pueraria tuberosa* contain several bioactive constituents such as daidzein, genistein, quercetin, irisolidone, biochanin A, biochanin B, isoorientin, and mangiferin, which possess an extensive range of pharmacological activities (Bharti et al. 2020). It can prevent the aging-phenotype of human dermal fibroblasts Puerarin blocks aging phenotype in cultured human dermal fibroblasts (Kamiya et al. 2021).

22.5.7 *Rapamycin (Sirolimus) and Rapalogues*

Rapamycin is not a nutritional gerosuppressor but originates from a natural source. It is one of the most studied senotherapeutics to date. The compound was isolated from *Streptomyces hygroscopicus*, a bacteria found in a soil sample at Rapa Nui, Easter island. Initially, it was known as having antifungal activities (called sirolimus), but later on it was found to have immunosuppressive and antiproliferative properties, so it was used successfully to reduce organ rejection with kidney transplantation. Its roles in cancer suppression led to the discovery that rapamycin is an inhibitor of the mammalian/mechanistic target of rapamycin (mTOR) and is one of the few drugs that is able to extend lifespan in several organisms (Seto 2012, Selvarani et al. 2020). A summary of the in vivo evidence for Rapamycin targeting multiple age-associated dysfunctions and pathologies in mammals has been reviewed (Morsli and Bellantuono 2021).

mTOR is a key component of cellular metabolism that integrates nutrient sensing with cellular processes that fuel cell growth and proliferation, playing a central role in the regulation of the aging process and lifespan (Papadopoli et al. 2019). The effects of rapamycin on various metabolic pathways have been summarized (Morsli and Bellantuono 2021). The low bioavailability of rapamycin led to the design of rapamycin analogues, called “rapalogues”, such as mTOR inhibitors temsirolimus (CCI-779), everolimus (RAD001), and ridaforolimus/deforolimus (MK-8669/AP23573), by chemical design. Rapalogues have a safer toxicity profile but still exhibit a number of drawbacks (Viana et al. 2018). Second generation rapalogues, dual mTOR and PI3K inhibitors, mTORC1 and mTORC2 dual inhibitors, have been designed and await further characterization (Leontieva et al. 2015; Zhang et al. 2011). Several polyphenols have been found to inhibit or influence mTOR, such as honokiol, curcumin (see Sect. 22.4.1.2), epigallocatechin-3-gallate (see Sect. 22.5.3), theaflavin digallate,

quercetin (see Sect. 22.4.1.7), punicalagin, fisetin (see Sect. 22.4.1.3), oleuropein (see Sect. 22.5.9) and resveratrol (see Sect. 22.5.8) (Pazoki-Toroudi et al. 2016; Kumar et al. 2019).

22.5.8 *Resveratrol and Resveralogues*

Resveratrol is a non-flavonoid polyphenol stilbenoid (3,5,4'-trihydroxy-*trans*-stilbene) and phytoalexin produced by plants in response to injury e.g. UV or pathogen attack, and is often found in grapes, raisins, berries and peanuts. Resveratrol has the ability to remove ROS, inhibit cyclooxygenase (COX), and trigger anti-inflammatory pathways via SIRT1 activation. Multiple studies show that resveratrol can suppress SASP. However, lifespan extension has yet not been confirmed (Grinan-Ferre et al. 2021).

Epigenetic modifications are associated with genome stability, gene transcription, and metabolic regulation. Acetylation is one of the most characterized histone modifications. Histone acetyltransferase (HAT) and histone deacetylase (HDAC) enzymes control the levels of histone acetylation, modulating gene expression (Cavalli and Heard 2019). Sirtuins (SIRT) 1–7 are enzymes classified as class III HDACs.

A recent work presented ongoing clinical trials using resveratrol as well as other phytochemicals stimulating SIRT1 activity (Iside et al. 2020). The parent resveratrol molecule has been modified to give rise to at least 24 different “resveralogues”, structurally related to resveratrol. Replacement of the 3,5-dihydroxy substituents with 3,5-dimethoxy groups significantly enhances SIRT1 activity, and reduces toxicity. At 100 μM many of the compounds, including resveratrol, induce senescence in primary human fibroblast MRC5 cells in culture. However, at lower concentrations (10 μM), most compounds rescued subpopulations of cells within the culture from senescence (Birar et al. 2020).

22.5.9 *Secoiridoids*

Iridoids are cyclopentane [c] pyran monoterpenoids present in plants and insects, considered as defensive compounds. Cleavage of a bond in the cyclopentane ring leads to the formation of a subclass known as secoiridoids, bioactive compounds with a large variety of pharmacological properties including anti-diabetic, anti-inflammatory, immunosuppressive, neuroprotective, anti-cancer and anti-obesity. The olive tree *Olea europaea* L. is particularly rich in oleuropein (OL), dimethyl-OL, and ligstroside secoiridoids, and their hydrolysis derivatives are mostly OL-aglycone, oleocanthal (OLE), oleacein (OLA), elenolate, oleoside-11-methyl ester, elenoic acid, hydroxytyrosol (HTy), and tyrosol (Ty) (Castejon et al. 2020). The presence of OLE and OLA in extra-virgin olive oil has been investigated in relation to healthy aging (Nikou et al. 2019). OLE and ligstroside have been found to protect

against mitochondrial dysfunction in models of Alzheimer's disease and brain aging (Grewal et al. 2020).

22.6 Other Nutritional and Dietary Interventions

22.6.1 Geroprotectors

Many natural products do not necessarily fall into the categories of senolytics and gerosuppressors per se, but exert their health-promoting and anti-aging activities as contributors to protect cellular integrity. A geroprotector is a compound that protects the integrity of cellular structures and macromolecules. Several gerosuppressors that modulate the SASP can also act as geroprotectors, such as rapamycin and metformin (Morsli and Bellantuono 2021).

Nutraceutical compounds encompassing phytochemicals, probiotic bacteria and omega-3-fatty acids have shown promising anti-immunosenescence and anti-cellular senescence potential in immune cell (Sharma and Padwad 2020).

There are many nutritional anti-aging compounds. Anti-carcinogenic, anti-inflammatory, anti-viral, anti-microbial, anti-proliferative and antioxidant activities can be found in many phytochemicals, that either directly or indirectly can be considered geroprotective. Examples are found in the Citrus family (oranges, lemons, grapefruits, etc.) (Barreca et al. 2020), foods in the Mediterranean diet (Cannataro et al. 2021), edible flowers (Zheng et al. 2021), honey (Jaganathan and Mandal 2009), olive oils (Nikou et al. 2019), mushrooms (Abdelshafy et al. 2021), cocoa (Martin and Ramos 2021), etc.

Alpha-ketoglutarate (AKG), an intermediate of the tricarboxylic acid cycle that leads to energy production, biosynthesis of certain amino acids, collagen biosynthesis, epigenetic regulation of gene expression, regulation of redox homeostasis, and detoxification of hazardous substances, can extend lifespan and delay the onset of age-associated decline in experimental animal models, and is being considered a geroprotective drug (Bayliak and Lushchak 2021).

Nicotinamide (NAM) is a form of vitamin B₃ found mainly in meat, fish, cereals, nuts, and mushrooms, as well as to a lesser extent in some vegetables and used as a dietary supplement and medication. Nicotinamide mononucleotide (NMN) is a nucleotide derivative of niacin (one of three forms of vitamin B₃). NMN is a precursor of NAD⁺, an important cofactor in redox reactions in energy metabolism. Aging is accompanied by a gradual decline in tissue and cellular NAD⁺ levels in multiple model organisms, including rodents and humans. Therefore, supplementation with NMN is geroprotective (Covarrubias et al. 2021).

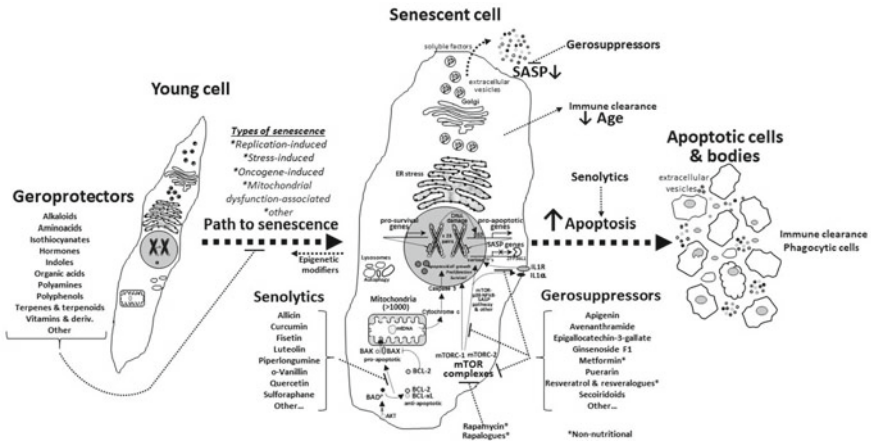


Fig. 22.1 Schematic representation of the main modes of action of several nutritional senolytic compounds and gerosuppressors on senescent cells. Nutritional compounds may have multiple targets and multiple functions. The specific senescent state can vary from one cell to another, and can also vary between cell/tissue types. A nutritional senotherapeutic may have different effects depending on the specific type of senescent cell. Abbreviations: mTOR (mammalian/mechanistic target of rapamycin), SASP (Senescence-associated secretory phenotype). The full name and description of genes and proteins can be found in <https://www.genecards.org/>

22.6.2 Epigenetic Modifiers

Very few studies have yet explored the role of specific nutrients in epigenetic modification to achieve rejuvenation as a means of anti-aging strategies. One recent study has shown that a 1-year Mediterranean-like diet, in a pilot study of elderly healthy subjects from the NU-AGE study (60 Italians, 60 Poles), resulted in epigenetic rejuvenation (Gensous et al. 2020).

In the trial “Thymus Regeneration, Immunorestitution, and Insulin Mitigation” (TRIIM), nine healthy men were given a cocktail of human growth hormone (hGH), metformin, dehydroepidandrosterone (DHEA), vitamin D3, and zinc for 1-year, that shed about 2.5 years off their biological ages, according to an analysis of their epigenome. (Fahy et al. 2019; Bartke et al. 2021) (Fig. 22.1).

22.7 Concluding Remarks and Future Perspectives

The nutritional geroscience field is relatively young. The impact that pharmacologically-synthesized senomorphics and dietary components, alone or in combination, might have on the short- and long-term survival and secretory function of senescent cells awaits further characterization. The cellular and systemic

divergence of phytochemical targets suggests that the best way to assess the contribution of individual nutrients or compounds, alone or in combination, is to design long-term longitudinal clinical trials, whereby individuals of different genetic backgrounds, lifestyles and environments, are followed to assess health outcomes, disease emergence, duration of health span and lifespan.

Senescent cells arise by means of different processes, and their resulting SASP profiles will undoubtedly be heterogenous. It is therefore expected that their response to senolytics and senomorphic compounds will vary. Clinical intervention studies will be needed to understand the precise contribution of single or combined dietary phytochemicals, to the rate of aging in each one of the aging trajectories that lead to specific age-associated diseases and their accompanying disabilities.

It is becoming more evident that most of the compounds tested to date, that have anti-senescence phenotype properties, have multiple targets, and their use might influence cells and body processes other than only senescent cells. This implies that safety issues need to always be considered when administering senotherapeutics, including estimation of the senescence burden of an individual before any clinical intervention.

The significance of hormesis to the use of senotherapeutics will require understanding the effects of different doses, frequency and time of administration (Santoro et al. 2020; Rattan 2008).

The list of natural compounds that can exert senolytic and senomorphic activities is likely to grow in the years to come, some of which could have novel targets on pre-senescent and senescent cells. It is important to assess the chemical structure of the natural compound including its modifications such as glycosylation, etc. that could have implications for their activities *in vivo*, implying that chemical synthesis of the basic structure of the compounds alone may not be sufficient to result in fully active senotherapeutics (Huang et al. 2016).

Finally, it would be ideal to investigate the role of natural and synthetic compounds on non-senescent cells, at all stages of their lives, that could help to delay senescence and improve resilience, without significantly compromising basic body function. The pursuit of an extended health span by means of dietary interventions would facilitate health care and reduce or postpone disease burden among the elderly.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

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