MINIREVIEW

The crosstalk between bacteria and host autophagy: host defense or bacteria offense

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Xenophagy is a specific selective autophagy for the elimination of intracellular bacteria. Current evidence suggests that the processes for host autophagy system to recognize and eliminate invading bacteria are complex, and vary according to different pathogens. Although both ubiquitin-dependent and ubiquitin-independent autophagy exist in host to defense invading bacteria, successful pathogens have evolved diverse strategies to escape from or paralyze host autophagy system. In this review, we discuss the mechanisms of host autophagy system to recognize and eliminate intracellular pathogens and the mechanisms of different pathogens to escape from or paralyze host autophagy system, with a particular focus on the most extensively studied bacteria.

Keywords: autophagy, xenophagy, bacteria, infection, bacterial effector

Introduction

Autophagy is a conserved intracellular degradation process for the recycling of nutrients and energy, which is critical to cellular homeostasis maintenance and stress responses (Mizushima and Komatsu, 2011). Although typically low under basal conditions, cellular autophagy can be significantly upregulated under stress conditions to optimize cell survival (Simon *et al.*, 2017). According to the type of degraded cargo, autophagy can be divided into non-selective autophagy and selective autophagy (Anding and Baehrecke, 2017). Non-selective nutrient recycling process is a canonical autophagy pathway to remove multiple cellular components, while selective autophagy targets specific cargos, such as unwanted cytosolic components and damaged and/or redundant organelles (Gatica *et al.*, 2018).

Xenophagy is a specific selective autophagy for the identification and removal of intracellular bacteria, which has early been characterized as an immune response to eliminate bacteria (Sharma et al., 2018). Since Rikihis first observed the formation of autophagosomes in polymorphonuclear cells of guinea pigs infected with *Rickettsia* in 1984 (Rikihis, 1984), various bacteria, including Streptococcus, Mycobacterium tuberculosis (Mtb), Shigella flexneri, Salmonella Typhimurium (S. Typhimurium), and Listeria monocytogenes (Lm), have been reported to be recognized and removed by the host autophagy system (Kohler and Roy, 2017). Although autophagy defensive strategy limits the proliferation of most intracellular pathogens, many bacteria have evolved a variety of defense strategies to escape from xenophagy through inhibiting the initiation of autophagy or the formation of autolysosomes. In this review, we discuss the mechanisms of host autophagy system to recognize and eliminate intracellular pathogens and the mechanisms of different pathogens to escape from or paralyze host autophagy system, with a particular focus on the most extensively studied bacteria.

Recognition of Invading Bacteria by Host Autophagy System

In general, host autophagy system can recognize invading bacteria through both ubiquitin-dependent and ubiquitinindependent manners. According to a prevailing view, a ubiquitin-adaptor protein-LC3 (microtubule-associated protein 1 light chain 3) model is the main ubiquitin-dependent pathway to recognize invading bacteria, in which ubiquitin-coated bacteria are recognized by adaptors and targeted by autophagy machinery. Besides, the adaptors can also target bacteria-residing vacuoles or damaged vacuolar membranes in a ubiquitin-independent manner.

Ubiquitin-adaptor-LC3 mediated xenophagy

Ubiquitination of cargos represents an important step in xenophagy (Peng *et al.*, 2017). When bacteria infect host cells, they can be recognized and labelled by ubiquitin in the cytosol and serve as autophagy targets (Linares *et al.*, 2013). Heterogeneous ubiquitin ligase E3 plays a critical role in bacterial specific ubiquitination, and SMURF1 (Smad ubiqui

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tination regulatory factor) and TRIM (tripartite motif) family proteins are the most studied E3 ligases in xenophagy (Fig. 1). SMURF1 mediates K48-linked ubiquitination of Mtb and recruitment of autophagy machinery components (adaptor NBR1 [next to BRCA1 gene 1 protein], autophagy protein LC3 and lysosomal associated membrane protein), and thus modulates Mtb replication in macrophages (Franco *et al.*, 2017). TRIM family proteins also act in autophagic lysosomes to control Mtb invasion. For instance, TRIM16 can integrate galectin- and ubiquitin-based processes, which directs the recognition of Mtb and the mobilization of the core autophagy regulators ATG16L1 (autophagy related 16 like 1), ULK1 (Unc-51 like autophagy activating kinase 1), and Beclin1 (Chauhan *et al.*, 2016).

The ubiquitinated bacteria can be recognized by a group of adaptors featuring a ubiquitin-binding domain and a LC3interacting region motif (Wu and Li, 2019). Typical adaptors include p62/SQSTM1, optineurin (OPTN) and NDP52 (nuclear domain 10 protein 52). As the first identified mammalian selective autophagy adaptor, p62 has been reported to be involved in the xenophagy of *S*. Typhimurium, Mtb, *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Shigella flexneri* (Komatsu *et al.*, 2007; Dupont *et al.*, 2009; Watson *et al.*, 2012; Neumann *et al.*, 2016). The activity of OPTN in xenophagy is modulated by phosphorylation modification, which can enhance autophagic clearance of cytosolic *Salmonella* (Wild *et al.*, 2011). NDP52 plays a dual role in xenophagy: the targeting of pathogens to autophagosomes by its selective autophagy adaptor activity and the control of pathogen-containing autophagosome maturation by interacting with ATG8 orthologs (Verlhac *et al.*, 2015).

Ubiquitin-independent xenophagy

Ubiquitin-independent pathways also play an important role in xenophagy. Adaptors link the non-ubiquitylated cargos to the autophagy machinery by targeting bacteria residing vacuoles or damaged vacuolar membranes. The adaptors can response to a wide variety of protein-, lipid- or sugar-based signals, which include galectin, complement protein C3 and NOD (nucleotide binding oligomerization domain) proteins (Fig. 1). As a danger receptor, Galectin-8 targets damaged Salmonella-containing vacuoles (SCVs) by binding glycans and then initiates the upstream autophagy machinery to invading bacteria by recruiting NDP52 (Thurston et al., 2012). Specifically, NDP52 forms a trimeric complex with FIP200 and SINTBAD, which are the subunit and adaptor of ULK and TBK1 complexes, respectively (Ravenhill et al., 2019). However, Galectin-8-dependent recruitment of NDP52 to SCVs is transient and subsequently by ubiquitin-dependent NDP52 recruitment. The proton pump V-ATPase can also sense vacuolar damage and then recruit ATG16L1 onto bacteria-containing vacuoles to initiate LC3 lipidation (Xu et al., 2019). In vivo, the complement protein C3 is deposited on



Fig. 1. Recognition of invading bacteria by host autophagy system. In the ubiquitin-adaptor protein-LC3 xenophagy model, E3 ubiquitin ligases (SMURF1 and TRIM) mediate ubiquitination of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (Mtb) and recruitment of autophagy machinery components (adaptors, autophagy regulators ATG16L1, ULK1 and LC3), and thus restrict Mtb invasion; In the ubiquitin-independent xenophagy models, galectin, complement protein C3 and NOD-based signals can induce the recognition of intracellular bacteria (*Salmonella, Listeria monocytogenes, Shigella flexneri*) to initiate the upstream autophagy machinery (adaptors, autophagy regulators ATG16L1 and ULK1). Ub, ubiquitin. most invasive pathogens (such as Lm) and then carried into host cells, where it increases autophagy targeting and growth restriction through a direct interaction with ATG16L1 (Merle *et al.*, 2015; Sorbara *et al.*, 2018). NOD1 and NOD2 are also critical for recognition of intracellular bacteria through peptidoglycan detection at the site of bacterial entry in plasma membrane, where they recruit ATG16L1 to initiate xenophagy (Travassos *et al.*, 2010; Philpott *et al.*, 2014).

The Regulation of Xenophagy on the Elimination of Different Infecting Bacteria

As an important part of defense mechanism, autophagy targets a variety of bacteria, including bacteria in cytoplasm (Group A *Streptococcus*), in immature phagosomes (Mtb), or in damaged phagocytic vacuoles (*S.* Typhimurium). Owing to different intracellular pathogens adopt distinct lifestyles within host cells, the process of xenophagy also varies among different pathogens. Next, we will discuss the recent advances on the mechanisms by which xenophagy eliminates different bacteria, with a particular focus on extensively studied ones including Group A *Streptococcus* (GAS), *S.* Typhimurium and Mtb (Fig. 2).

Group A Streptococcus (GAS)

Group A *Streptococcus* is a clinically leading pathogen of diverse mild (pharyngitis and impetigo) and severe (toxic shock-like syndrome, acute poststreptococcal glomerulonephritis, acute rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease) diseases (Walker *et al.*, 2014). Tamotsu Yoshimori first found that xen-



Bacteria degradation

ophagy can act as an innate defense system against invasive GAS within nonphagocytic cells (Nakagawa et al., 2004). Intracellular GAS resides in the LC3-decorated compartments during xenophagy, and the phosphorylation of LC3 by hippo kinases STK3/STK4 (serine/threonine kinase 3/4) is essential for the fusion of autophagosomes with lysosomes (Fig. 2) (Wilkinson et al., 2015). In addition to LC3, Beclin1 also plays an important role in GAS-induced autophagy. Beclin1 mainly interacts with UVRAG (ultraviolet radiation resistance-associated gene protein) during GAS infection and promotes the formation of autolysosomes. However, NLRX1 (NOD-like receptor family member X1) can negatively regulate GASinduced autophagy by interacting with the Beclin1-UVRAG complex (Fig. 2) (Nakajima et al., 2017; Aikawa et al., 2018). CD46 is a ubiquitous surface receptor for GAS, and the engagement of CD46-Cyt-1/GOPC-Beclin1 pathway induces autophagic degradation of GAS to restrict early pathogen infection (Fig. 2) (Cattaneo, 2004; Joubert et al., 2009). Furthermore, the Rab GTPase family members play distinct roles during autophagy against GAS (Fig. 2): Rab9A is involved in GAS-containing autophagosome-like vacuole (GcAV) enlargement and lysosomal fusion (Nozawa et al., 2012), Rab17, Rab23, and Rab30 are essential for GcAV formation (Haobam et al., 2014; Nakajima et al., 2019).

Salmonella Typhimurium

Salmonella Typhimurium is a facultative intracellular pathogen and an important cause of many host-specific diseases, such as gastroenteritis in humans (LaRock *et al.*, 2015). After invading host cells, this pathogen typically resides within a vacuolar compartment termed SCV. The fate of the SCV is

> Fig. 2. The mechanisms of xenophagy clearance of three representative bacteria. STK3/STK4-LC3, Beclin1-UVRAG, CD46-GOPC-Beclin1 pathways and Rab GTPase family induce autophagic degradation of Group A *Streptococcus* to restrict pathogen infection; E3 ligases LRSAM1 and LUBAC trigger ubiquitination events and thus regulates S. Typhimurium-induced autophagy through the recognition of adaptors (NDP52, p62 and OPTN); ATG5 is required for Rv1468c-Ub-p62-LC3 in teraction-mediated host xenophagy clearance of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. Ub, ubiquitin.

modified by two independent type III secretion systems (T3SS) encoded on Salmonella pathogenicity islands 1 and 2 (SPI-1 and SPI-2) (LaRock et al., 2015), which mediates the main pathogenesis for S. Typhimurium to invade and colonize host cells (Haraga et al., 2008). Specifically, the SPI-1 secretion system (T3SS1) functions to damage eukaryotic cell membranes and therefore enable bacterial invasion, while the SPI-2 secretion system (T3SS2) facilitates the replication of intracellular bacteria within SCVs (Casanova, 2017). Intriguingly, T3SS1 can also damage the SCVs, which has been suggested to be the main reason for autophagic capture of cytosolic S. Typhimurium (Birmingham et al., 2006). Subsequent to the extensive membrane damage and cytosolic entry, LRSAM1 (leucine rich repeat and sterile alpha motif containing 1), LUBAC (linear ubiquitin chain assembly complex) and other host E3 ligases trigger ubiquitination events (Fig. 2). LRSAM1 detects S. Typhimurium via its leucine-rich repeat domain and induces ubiquitination via RING domain (Huett et al., 2012). LUBAC is the only E3 ligase complex found to mediate cargos ubiquitination in a linear form, and thus regulates S. Typhimurium-induced autophagy initiation through OPTN (Chu et al., 2020). In contrast, deubiquitinating enzymes (DUBs) can specifically hydrolyze ubiquitin chains from cargos and thus interfere with xenophagy. A typical example is OTULIN (ovarian tumor domain-containing deubiquitinase with linear linkage specificity). The depletion of OTULIN can increase the formation of linear ubiquitin coat around cytosolic S. Typhimurium and restrict bacterial proliferation (van Wijk et al., 2017).

The most extensively studied adaptors are NDP52 and p62, and they are both required for the autophagy against *S*. Typhimurium (Fig. 2). Through recruiting to pathogen independently and targeting distinct microdomains on *S*. Typhimurium, the adaptors drive effective xenophagy cooperatively (Zheng *et al.*, 2009; Cemma *et al.*, 2011). Modulation of xenophagy and lysosomal pathway can inhibit *S*. Typhimurium infection, and small molecule xenophagy regulators have been identified to effectively curb *S*. Typhimurium survival, such as acacetin. Acacetin treatment can maintain transcription factor EB (a regulator of autophagy and lysosome biogenesis)-mediated xenophagy to reduce intracellular *S*. Typhimurium burden (Ammanathan *et al.*, 2020).

Mycobacterium tuberculosis (Mtb)

Mycobacterium tuberculosis is the main cause for serious infectious disease tuberculosis that remains a severe global public health problem (Vergne et al., 2004). In addition to primarily attacking the lung, the bacteria can also attack many parts of the body including the kidney, spine, and brain. Fortunately, humans have evolved several innate immune defenses against the bacteria infection. Xenophagy is one of such innate defenses, which inhibits mycobacterial survival via promoting the acidification and maturation of mycobacterial phagosomes (Gutierrez et al., 2004). Several autophagy factors (ATG5, OPTN, p62, and LC3) have been revealed to act against Mtb infection (Fig. 2). Especially, ATG5 is essential for the elimination of invading Mtb by inhibiting neutrophil-mediated immunopathology. However, loss of many other conventional autophagy genes does not affect outcome. Therefore, further researches are needed to clarify whether

ATG5 restrict Mtb infection through a non-canonical autophagy pathway (Behar and Baehrecke, 2015; Kimmey *et al.*, 2015). ATG5 is also required for ubiquitin-Rv1468c interaction mediated host immune clearance of Mtb (Chai *et al.*, 2019). In addition, both OPTN and p62 are required for autophagic defense against Mtb (Zhang *et al.*, 2019).

To target autophagy, several potential reagents have been identified to improve the outcome of current antibiotic-based treatment of tuberculosis. The candidates include: (a) vitamin D receptor signaling including 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D3, 4-phenylbutyrate and IFN-y, which can induce the autophagy activation and/or phagosome-lysosome fusion (Yuk et al., 2009; Fabri et al., 2011; Rekha et al., 2015). (b) Nuclear receptors (NRD1, PPARa, and ERR) and agonists that regulate the transcription and/or post-translation of autophagy genes/proteins (Chandra et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2017a, 2018b). (c) The mediators involved in AMPK pathway modulate autophagy activation, such as calcium-mobilizing agents, phytochemicals, resveratrol and cyclic peptides (Palucci and Delogu, 2018). (d) The inhibitors of mTOR (mammalian target of rapamycin) signaling, such as rapamycin and other analogs (sirolimus, temsirolimus, and everolimus) (Floto et al., 2007; Singh and Subbian, 2018), of which everolimus presents as a good candidate drug because of the higher bioavailability and lower vascular inflammation (Cerni et al., 2019). It is worth noting that mTOR inhibition interferes with phagosomal maturation but increases the replication of Mtb during HIV/Mtb co-infection, indicating that autophagy induction as a potential treatment method for tuberculosis should be handled with caution in the context of HIV/Mtb co-infection (Andersson et al., 2016). (e) Other autophagytargeting small molecules/chemicals, including gefitinib, verapamil and baicalin (Paik et al., 2019).

Other bacteria

In addition to the above pathogens, a number of other intracellular pathogens can also be recognized and restricted by host autophagy system, including Lm, Shigella flexneri, Acinetobacter baumannii, Legionella pneumophila, Bacillus, and Burkholderia (Gomes and Dikic, 2014; Siqueira et al., 2018). The mechanisms that cells use to target different bacteria for autophagic degradation has both overlaps and differences. For example, Lm can be sensed and targeted by at least two pathways, including NOD1-ATG16L1-LC3 and ubiquitinp62-LC3 pathways (Ogawa et al., 2011). Similarly, Shigella *flexneri*, an intestinal pathogen, can also be degraded through these two pathways (Travassos et al., 2010). In fact, in most cases, LC3-decorated autophagosomes are formed and bring the target bacteria into lysosome for degradation (Huang and Brumell, 2014). Although in some cases, different bacteria share the same molecular events, but the autophagy responses vary among different bacterial infections. For instance, complement protein C3/ATG16L1 interaction drives autophagydependent elimination of invasive Lm, on the contrary, Shigella flexneri and Salmonella can use proteases to cleave bound C3 and escape C3-mediated xenophagy restriction despite the early complement C3-dependent also increases autophagy targeting (Sorbara et al., 2018).

The Mechanisms of Bacteria to Escape from Xenophagy

Autophagy usually serves as a defense mechanism to limit most pathogens survival within host cells, however, some bacteria have evolved various strategies to evade autophagic recognition, to paralyze host autophagy system, and even to hijack autophagy for their proliferation. These strategies used by successful pathogens to escape from host autophagy system include the secretion of effectors, microRNAs, and lipid virulence factors. Effectors are secreted into the host cytoplasm via type I-VII secretion systems and are the common strategy to suppress autophagy initiation, autophagosome formation and/or autophagosome-lysosomes fusion. Next, we will review the represent examples of these autophagic escape mechanisms.

Effectors secreted by bacteria suppress xenophagy SopF secreted by *Salmonella* inhibits the autophagic recogni-

tion: although S. Typhimurium is often used as a biological model for studying xenophagy, only a small fraction (10–20%) of intracellular S. Typhimurium can be targeted by autophagy in the early stages of infections (Birmingham et al., 2006). SopF, a novel conserved S. Typhimurium T3SS effector, is identified responsible for the inhibition of S. Typhimuriuminduced xenophagy (Cheng et al., 2017). As a phosphoinositide binding effector, SopF is essential for maintaining the integrity of the nascent SCV membrane and thus increases SCV stability and inhibits autophagic capture of S. Typhimurium (Lau et al., 2019). In addition, SopF can specifically disrupt V-ATPase-ATG16L1 axis to block the recruitment of autophagy proteins, and thereby escape from the immune recognition of host cells (Xu et al., 2019) (Fig. 3). Specifically, upon SCV damage, V-ATPase recruits ATG16L1 and initiates LC3 lipidation, however, SopF catalyzes ADP-ribosylation of ATP6V0C on Gln124, which specifically disrupts recruitment of ATG16L1 by the V-ATPase and thus promotes bac-



Fig. 3. The mechanisms of bacteria-secreted effectors with inhibitory effect in xenophagy. T3SS effector SopF secreted by *Salmonella* inhibits infection-induced V-ATPase-ATG16L1 axis to block autophagy; Virulence factor VacA secreted by *Helicobacter pylori* inhibits the activity of TRPML1 and impairs lysosome trafficking and autophagosomes maturation. T3SS, type III secretion system.

terial growth. In the early stages of infection, the SopF is secreted in low levels and its autophagic inhibitory effect will be gradually enhanced with duration of infection, which answers why S. Typhimurium-induced autophagy is a transient process. Notably, SopF is a broad-spectrum xenophagy-specific inhibitor, but does not affect canonical autophagy. In addition, SopF and SopB (another T3SS effector) act antagonistically to regulate SCV stability (Lau *et al.*, 2019), therefore, it is suspected that SopB may counteract SopF-induced autophagy inhibition.

VacA secreted by Helicobacter pylori interferes with the endolysosomal trafficking and autophagosome maturation: vacuolating cytotoxin A (VacA) is a critical virulence factor of Helicobacter pylori (Hp), which is a gram-negative human gastric pathogen and the main risk factor of gastric cancer development (Hooi et al., 2017). The effects of VacA on the host autophagy system are determined by the duration/level of exposure to the toxin (Ricci, 2016). VacA can induce autophagy as a cytoprotective effect to restrict invasive bacteria during acute Hp infection. For example, VacA promote autophagic cell death to limit cellular damage via endoplasmic reticulum stress signaling or connexin 43 accumulation in gastric epithelial cells (Terebiznik et al., 2009; Yahiro et al., 2012, 2015; Foegeding et al., 2019). In contrast, VacA disrupts host autophagy and promotes bacterial survival during chronic Hp infection. The main reason for such a phenomenon is prolonged exposure to VacA impairs endolysosomal trafficking and autophagosome maturation, leading to the accumulation of dysfunctional lysosomes and autolysosomes (Greenfield and Jones, 2013). For example, chronic VacA exposure inhibits the activity of lysosomal calcium channel TRPML1 (transient receptor potential membrane channel mucolipin 1) to disrupt endolysosomal trafficking or induce disarmed autophagosomes (lacking of cathepsin-D) accumulation, leading to the generation of a protective intracellular reservoir for Hp survival (Fig. 3) (Raju et al., 2012; Capurro et al., 2019). In some cases, VacA interacts with other effectors to impair autophagy pathway. For instance, VacA promotes cytotoxin associated gene A (CagA) accumulation to disrupt endolysosomal trafficking and autophagosome maturation (Abdullah et al., 2019). In addition, VacA perturbations in mitochondria disrupts cellular amino acid homeostasis, which also drives the inhibition of mTORC1 signaling and autophagic activities (Kim et al., 2018a).

Other bacterial secreted effectors: in addition to the above effectors, multiple effectors secreted by bacteria are exported to the host-pathogen interface to interfere with the xenophagy machinery at different stages (Table 1). These effectors include: (a) effectors inhibiting autophagic recognition, such as Ssel, SdeA, InIK, and ActA. As two DUBs, *Salmonella*-secreted Ssel and *Legionella pneumophila*-secreted SdeA, can deubiquitinate cargos to inhibit the recognition of host autophagy system (Mesquita *et al.*, 2012; Sheedlo *et al.*, 2015). InIK and ActA recruit corresponding host partners to protect Lm from autophagic recognition (Yoshikawa *et al.*, 2009; Dortet *et al.*, 2011). SpeB cysteine protease degrades autophagy adaptor proteins p62, NDP52, and NBR1, thereby allowing GAS to escape autophagic recognition (Barnett *et al.*,

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Table 1. Examples of bacterial electors with minorory cheet in xenophagy							
Pathogen	Effector	Function	References				
Salmonella	SopF	SopF specifically modifies V-ATPase to inhibit the autophagic recognition	Xu et al. (2019)				
	Ssel	SseL inhibits selective autophagy of cytosolic aggregates	Mesquita et al. (2012)				
Helicobacter pylori	VacA	VacA impairs endolysosomal trafficking and autophagosome maturation	Raju <i>et al.</i> (2012) Capurro <i>et al.</i> (2019)				
Listeria monocytogenes	InIK	InlK recruits major vault protein to avoid autophagy	Dortet et al. (2011)				
	ActA	ActA recruits the Arp2/3 complex and Ena/VASP to escape from autophagic recognition	Yoshikawa et al. (2009)				
Legionella pneumophila	SdeA	SdeA deubiquitinates Lys63-linked chains from the phagosomal surface to antagonize autophagy	Sheedlo et al. (2015)				
	RavZ	RavZ recognizes and splits LC3-PE to avoid autophagy	Choy et al. (2012)				
	<i>Lp</i> SPL	LpSPL targets host's sphingolipid metabolism to restrain autophagy	Rolando et al. (2016)				
Group A Streptococcus	SpeB	SpeB degrades p62, NDP52 and NBR1 to escape the host autophagy	Barnett et al. (2013)				
Mycobacterium tuberculosis	erium tuberculosis SapM and PknG SapM and PknG works in concert to arrest phagosome and autophagosome maturation		Zulauf <i>et al.</i> (2018)				

Table 1. Examples of bacterial effectors with inhibitory effect in xenophagy

2013). (b) Effectors directly interfering with key autophagy factors, such as *Legionella pneumophila*-secreted RavZ, which can induce irreversible LC3 deconjugation (Choy *et al.*, 2012). (c) Effectors impairing autophagosome maturation or blocking the fusion of autophagosome and lysosome, such as SapM and PknG, which arrest phagosome and autophagosome maturation during Mtb infection (Zulauf *et al.*, 2018). (d) Effectors modulating the host's metabolism, such as *Legionella pneumophila*-secreted *Lp*SpL, which targets the sphingolipid metabolism of host cells to exploit the host autophagy system (Rolando *et al.*, 2016).

MicroRNAs: the important mediators of bacteria to escape from xenophagy

MicroRNAs (miRNAs) are small non-coding RNA with a length of about 22 nucleotides, which can specifically regulate target gene expression via post-transcriptional mechanisms (Aredia and Scovassi, 2017). Increasing evidences suggest that various pathogens evade host autophagy system using miRNA-dependent mechanisms (Silwal *et al.*, 2020). Considering Mtb is one of the most extensively studied pathogens in xenophagy,

thus, here we focus on recent researches regarding the roles of miRNAs in autophagy regulation during Mtb infection (Table 2). Several miRNAs act as autophagy inhibitors to regulate Mtb survival, such as miR-30A (Chen et al., 2015), miR-27A (Liu et al., 2018), miR-33 (Ouimet et al., 2016), miR-1958 (Ding et al., 2019), miR-129-3p (Qu et al., 2019), miR-18a (Yuan et al., 2020), miR-144* (Kim et al., 2017b), miR-125b-5p (Liu et al., 2020), miR-125a-3p (Kim et al., 2015), miR-26a (Sahu et al., 2017), and miR-155 (Etna et al., 2018). These miRNAs inhibit integrated pathways involved in autophagy and lysosomal function by targeting the key autophagic effectors (such as Beclin1, ATG5, and LC3). Interestingly, miR-155 plays two opposite roles in regulating autophagy, depending on the host cell type and bacterial strain. Mtb infection of human dendritic cells manipulates miR-155 expression to target ATG3 for its own survival. However, miR-155 can also act as an autophagy activator to eliminate Mtb in murine macrophages by targeting Rheb, a negative regulator of autophagy (Wang et al., 2013). In addition to miR-155, miR-17-5p is another autophagy inducer of xenophagy during Mtb infection by targeting Mcl-1 and STAT3 (Kumar et al., 2016). In addition, most of the current studies on miRNAs

Table 2. The main microRNAs associated with xenophagy during Mycobacterium tuberculosis infection									
miRNA	Host cell	Experssion after infection	Target gene	Autophagy	Bacterial survival	References			
miR-30A	THP-1	1	Beclin1	\downarrow	<u>↑</u>	Chen et al. (2015)			
miR-27A	PBMC from TB patients, murine macrophages, <i>in vivo</i>	ſ	CACNA2D3	\downarrow	Ŷ	Liu et al. (2018)			
miR-33/miR-33*	Murine macrophages, THP-1, HEK293, in vivo	ſ	ATG5, ATG12, LAMP1 and LC3B	\downarrow	Ŷ	Ouimet <i>et al.</i> (2016)			
miR-1958	RAW264.7	1	ATG5	\downarrow	↑	Ding et al. (2019)			
miR-129-3p	RAW264.7	1	ATG4B	\downarrow	1	Qu et al. (2019)			
miR-18a	RAW264.7	1	ATM	\downarrow	↑	Yuan et al. (2020)			
miR-144*/ hsa-miR-144-5p	Human monocytes and macrophages	ſ	DRAM2	\downarrow	Ŷ	Kim <i>et al.</i> (2017b)			
miR-125b-5p	PBMC from TB patients, THP-1	1	DRAM2	\downarrow	<u>↑</u>	Liu et al. (2020)			
miR-125a-3p	Murine macrophages, in vivo		UVRAG	\downarrow	↑	Kim et al. (2015)			
miR-26a	Murine macrophages, in vivo	1	KLF4	\downarrow	↑	Sahu et al. (2017)			
miR-155	Human dendritic cells	1	ATG3	\downarrow	↑	Etna et al. (2018)			
miR-155	Murine macrophages, RAW264.7, in vivo	↑	Rheb	↑	\downarrow	Wang <i>et al.</i> (2013)			
miR-17-5p	Murine macrophages, RAW264.7	\downarrow	Mcl-1, STAT3	\downarrow	\uparrow	Kumar et al. (2016)			

regulating xenophagy are conducted *in vitro*. Therefore, more *in vivo* models need to be developed to evaluate the clinical value of miRNAs during bacterial infection.

The role of lipid virulence factors in xenophagy

The substance that contributes to the virulence of bacteria is called virulence factor, which is often related to the complex lipid components contained in bacteria. The lipid-rich cell wall of bacteria is a dynamic structure that participates in the transportation of nutrients and cytotoxic effectors. Thus, some certain virulence-associated lipids can help bacteria to survive long-term in host cells (Queiroz and Riley, 2017). Mannosecapped lipoarabinomannan is a *mycobacterial* cell wall component and one of the key virulence factors of Mtb, which significantly inhibits phagosomal maturation and hijacks autophagic mechanisms for bacterial survival (Shui et al., 2011; Vergne et al., 2014). Sulfoglycolipids (SLs) and phthiocerol dimycocerosates (PDIMs), another two major lipid virulence factors of Mtb, can also control autophagy-related pathways in host cells (Quigley et al., 2017; Augenstreich et al., 2019). The loss of PDIMs and SLs increases LC3 recruitment to Mtb compartments and promotes autophagy activation (Bah et al., 2020). In summary, these lipid virulence factors can be used as potential therapeutic targets for restricting bacterial infection and powerful tools for further explore of xenophagy mechanism, which will help develop autophagy-based antibacterial vaccines.

Conclusions and Future Prospects

This review summarizes recent insights into the crosstalk between bacterial infection and host autophagy system. (1) For host defense, host cells use autophagy system as a defensive mechanism to eliminate intracellular bacteria through ubiquitin-dependent or independent pathways. (2) For bacteria offense, successful pathogens secrete effectors, utilize lipid virulence factors and/or regulate miRNAs expression to escape from or paralyze host autophagy system for their own survival and replication. In fact, the frequency of xenophagy is very low in most models. Therefore, it is difficult to conduct in-depth research on the mechanisms of xenophagy. In the ubiquitin-adaptor protein-LC3 model, knocking out any genes encoding ubiquitin substrate proteins, ubiquitin ligases, or adaptor proteins cannot completely inhibit xenophagy. Although the combination of immunotherapy and autophagy have been studied in clinical treatments and several autophagy-related antibacterial drugs have become the focus of research, there are many unresolved questions deserve further investigation. (1) The mechanism underlying autophagic recognition of intracellular bacteria: how does the host cells perceive the invading bacteria and specifically induce xenophagy? How ubiquitin ligases and adaptors discriminate and recognize multiple potential cargos for autophagic degradation within same cell? What are the connections between multiple redundant adaptors? Why adaptors directly recruit LC3 downstream of autophagy pathway, and how are upstream autophagy proteins activated? Does xenophagy triggered by different bacteria use the same mechanism? (2) The mechanisms of bacteria to escape from xenophagy: do all bacteria have their own unique escape mechanism? Can multiple secreted effectors synergistically assist bacteria to escape from autophagy? Does bacterial infection cause changes in the entire miRNA expression profile? Are these miRNAs synergistic or antagonistic to regulate autophagy? Therefore, a better understanding of mechanisms underlying the crosstalk between bacteria and host autophagy would help to answer the above question and provide new targets for therapeutic intervention during bacterial infection.

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Conflict of Interest

Authors declare that they are no conflicts of interest.

Author Contributions

F.W. and L.Z. wrote the manuscript, and F.W. and G.L. revised the manuscript.

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