Abstract

Regulatory T cells are essential for the maintenance of peripheral immune tolerance, preventing alloimmunity and pathogen-induced immunopathology. While regulatory CD4⁺ T lymphocytes have been studied for over two decades, the existence of regulatory T lymphocytes in the CD8⁺ compartment is still controversial. Through the years, multiple CD8⁺ T lymphocytes subpopulations have been reported to exhibit regulatory activity, yet none has been canonically recognized. The aim of this thesis is to review current knowledge of these putative CD8⁺ regulatory lymphocytes and evaluate whether or not these subsets can be established as regulatory T cells. The emphasis of this thesis will be put on the phenotypic characteristics, regulatory activity and inhibitory mechanisms of these cells.

Keywords: CD8⁺ Regulatory T lymphocytes, immunological self-tolerance, immunosuppression