

On the definition of a criterion of immunogenicity

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Abstract

The main objective of immunology is to establish why and when an immune response occurs, that is, to determine a criterion of immunogenicity. According to the consensus view, the proper criterion of immunogenicity lies in the discrimination between self and nonself. Here we challenge this consensus by suggesting a simpler and more comprehensive criterion, the criterion of continuity (CC). Moreover, we show that this criterion may be considered as an interpretation of the immune 'self'. We conclude that immunologists can continue to speak of the self, provided that they admit that the self/nonself discrimination is not an adequate criterion of immunogenicity.

Keywords: Self, Nonself, Continuity, Tolerance, Immunogenicity

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