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www.elsevier.com

PII: S0891-5849(17)30010-2  
DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.freeradbiomed.2017.01.010>  
Reference: FRB13166

To appear in: *Free Radical Biology and Medicine*

Received date: 2 May 2016  
Revised date: 28 December 2016  
Accepted date: 6 January 2017

Cite this article as: Joohwan Kim, Kyu-Sun Lee, Ji-Hee Kim, Dong-Keon Lee, Minsik Park, Seunghwan Choi, Wonjin Park, Suji Kim, Yoon Kyoung Choi, Jong Yun Hwang, Jongseon Choe, Moo-Ho Won, Dooil Jeoung, Hansoo Lee, Sungwoo Ryoo, Kwon-Soo Ha, Young-Guen Kwon and Young-Myeong Kim, Aspirin prevents TNF- $\alpha$ -induced endothelial cell dysfunction by regulating the NF- $\kappa$ B-dependent miR-155/eNOS pathway: Role of a miR-155/eNOS axis in preeclampsia, *Free Radical Biology and Medicine* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.freeradbiomed.2017.01.010>

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**Aspirin prevents TNF- $\alpha$ -induced endothelial cell dysfunction by regulating the NF- $\kappa$ B-dependent miR-155/eNOS pathway: Role of a miR-155/eNOS axis in preeclampsia**

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**Abstract**

Preeclampsia is an inflammatory disease with endothelial cell dysfunction that occurs via decreased endothelial nitric oxide synthase/nitric oxide (eNOS/NO) activity. Aspirin reduces the incidence of hypertensive pregnancy complications. However, the underlying mechanism has not been clearly explained. Here, we found that tumor necrosis factor (TNF)- $\alpha$ , *microRNA (miR)-155*, and eNOS levels as well as endothelial redox phenotype were differentially regulated in preeclamptic patients, implying the involvement of TNF- $\alpha$ - and redox signal-mediated miR-155 biogenesis and eNOS downregulation in the pathogenesis of preeclampsia. Aspirin prevented the TNF- $\alpha$ -mediated increase in *miR-155* biogenesis and decreases in eNOS expression and NO/cGMP production in cultured human umbilical vein endothelial cells (HUVECs). Similar effects of aspirin were also observed in HUVECs treated with H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>. The preventive effects of aspirin was associated with the inhibition of nuclear factor- $\kappa$ B (NF- $\kappa$ B)-dependent *MIR155HG* (*miR-155* host gene) expression. Aspirin recovered the TNF- $\alpha$ -mediated decrease in wild-type, but not mutant, eNOS 3'-untranslated region reporter activity, whose effect was blocked by miR-155 mimic. Moreover, aspirin prevented TNF- $\alpha$ -mediated endothelial cell dysfunction associated with impaired vasorelaxation, angiogenesis, and trophoblast invasion, and the preventive effects were blocked by miR-155 mimic or an eNOS inhibitor. Aspirin rescued TNF- $\alpha$ -mediated eNOS downregulation coupled with endothelial dysfunction by inhibiting NF- $\kappa$ B-dependent transcriptional *miR-155* biogenesis. Thus, the redox-sensitive NF- $\kappa$ B/*miR-155*/eNOS axis may be crucial in the pathogenesis of vascular disorders including preeclampsia.

**Graphical abstract**

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