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**5-AMINOLEVULINIC ACID-DERIVED PROTOPORPHYRIN IX MEDIATED FLUORESCENCE DIAGNOSIS AND PHOTODYNAMIC THERAPY OF MACROPHAGES WITHIN THE ATHEROSCLEROTIC PLAQUE**

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Haibo Chen, Jianting Yao, Xin Sun, Ye Tian. *Department of Cardiology, The First Affiliated Hospital, Harbin Medical University*

**Objectives** To detect the accumulation of ALA-PpIX in the plaque macrophages and evaluate the effects of PDT on macrophages.

**Methods** The fluorescence of PpIX was detected by fluorescence microscope in THP-1 macrophages and plaque fresh-frozen sections of rabbit carotid artery. Immunofluorescent staining of plaque macrophages and SMCs was performed to locate ALA-PpIX. Plaque burden was evaluated by Haematoxylin and eosin (H&E) staining. Plaque macrophages and SMCs content was determined by immunohistochemical staining.

**Results** PpIX was found accumulated in the cytoplasm of THP-1 macrophages. In the plaque fresh-frozen sections, the fluorescence of ALA-PpIX was detected where macrophages immunofluorescence staining was positive. Compared with the control group, the plaque area was reduced by 59% ( $p<0.01$ ) at 4 week after PDT, the plaque macrophages content decreased by 56% ( $p<0.001$ ) at 1 week and 64% ( $p<0.001$ ) at 4 week respectively.

**Conclusions** ALA-PpIX is preferentially accumulated in the macrophages of plaque and ALA-PpIX mediated PDT significantly decreases macrophages content, indicating a promising strategy of atherosclerotic plaque macrophages diagnosis and therapy.