ABSTRACT

Macrophages are known to play an important role in the initiation and progression of atherosclerosis; however, the molecular signaling pathways in macrophages that are responsible for plaque rupture have not been fully identified. This study aims to identify biomarkers and therapy targets in macrophages in atherosclerotic conditions by systematic review. Research procedure of systematic reviews using the PRISMA protocol. The search engine used in this study is PubMed, with the keywords (macrophage AND atherosclerosis) AND (signaling pathway OR signaling pathway), the reference application used is Zotero to screen clinical articles. There were 689 articles identified and 11 clinical articles in inclusion criteria were obtained. The identification resulted in 30 biomarkers associated with macrophages in atherosclerotic conditions. The proposed biomarkers of atherosclerosis are interleukin (IL)-1β and IL-18. The proposed potential therapy targets for atherosclerosis are LOX-1 and schematic images of biomarkers in atherosclerotic plaques.

Keywords: Atherosclerosis, Macrophage, Biomarker, Therapy targets, Systematic review

INTRODUCTION

The high incidence of cardiovascular disease is of course directly proportional to the risk factors that influence it. Atherosclerosis is known as a risk factor for cardiovascular disease [1-3]. Atherosclerosis conditions can lead to heart attacks [4] and strokes [5-7] where according to the WHO in 2019, four out of five deaths in the world are related to cardiovascular disease. Cardiovascular disease is the number 1 cause of death globally; an estimated 17.9 million individuals died in 2016, or 31% of the total causes of death globally [8,103].

Atherosclerosis is a chronic and progressive inflammatory disease characterized by the buildup of lipids and fibrous plaques in the intima lining of the arterial walls [9,10]. Macrophages are known to play an important role in the initiation and progression of atherosclerosis [11-15]. The formation of atherosclerosis is closely related to the function of macrophages in the body. The lesions in atherosclerosis contain a large number of immune cells, especially macrophages [16] and T cells [17-19]. The same thing was stated by Zhang [20] that monocytes and macrophages play an important role in the progression of atherosclerosis, but the mechanism is not fully known.

Macrophages are included in the main cells of the immune system [21-23]. In carrying out its function, macrophages can act as Antigen Presenting Cells (APC) cells and as effector cells [24,25]. As APCs, macrophages play a role in capturing antigens to present to lymphocytes while as effector cells macrophages play a role in phagocytosis and the killing of microbes or foreign bodies. Macrophages are blood monocytes that come out into the tissue and differentiate when there is an inflammatory process. Macrophages are found in all connective tissue and organs [104]. According to Dahl [26], macrophages are the center of local inflammatory processes and apoptosis that lead to instability and plaque rupture; however, the molecular signaling pathways in macrophages that are responsible for plaque rupture have not been fully identified.

The early stages of atherosclerosis can occur in adolescence and develop slowly [27,28]. Clinical manifestations occur in the elderly and generally have a poor prognosis. Therefore, early detection of atherosclerosis is necessary as an effort to prevent and treat the cardiovascular disease early [29,30]. This study aims to identify biomarkers and therapeutic targets in macrophages in atherosclerotic conditions by conducting a systematic review, with the focus of the articles being studied in the form of clinical trial articles.

The role of macrophages in the natural immune system, especially in conditions of atherosclerosis, is of course mediated by a series of molecular signaling pathways that are responsible for these conditions [31-33]. Thus, the importance of identifying biomarkers and therapeutic targets in macrophages in atherosclerotic conditions underlies the reasons for this study. By knowing the role of macrophages, it can be used as a reference in drug development with a targeted system or can be used as blood biomarkers to support the diagnosis of atherosclerosis conditions.
box, enter the keyword "signaling pathway" in the all fields, and tags menu with the aim that the signaling pathway in question can be filtered from the entire article content. Initial identification was carried out by abstract screening of each study to differentiate between preclinical and clinical articles. Furthermore, data extraction of clinical articles that meet the criteria is carried out; biomarkers related to macrophages are grouped in atherosclerotic conditions, and further descriptive analysis.

The studies included in this systematic review study were clinical trial articles (original research) contained in PubMed with predetermined keywords and article search times, met inclusion criteria, and were free of exclusion criteria. Eligibility criteria include:

**Inclusion criteria**
Articles are original research, published in the PubMed search engine, using English, and clinical research.

**Exclusion criteria**
Articles other than original research (review, meta-analysis, and proceedings), preclinical research, and using languages other than English were not used as the subject of articles in this study.

Data on clinical articles that match the inclusion criteria were extracted manually and summarized into a table with data collected: research objectives, objects measured, methods used, patient demographics, and the results or conclusions obtained in each study.

The schematic of the article search process is shown in Fig. 1.

The data were analyzed descriptive and a schematic image of biomarkers was made on plaques containing macrophages in atherosclerotic conditions based on the results of the included clinical studies.

**DATA SEARCH RESULTS**
In accordance with the keywords written in the search engine box, the results obtained were 15,390 relevant articles. The 15,390 articles consist of journal articles: 15,113; reviews: 3258; systematic review: 3; clinical trial: 188; clinical study: 202; and 4 meta-analyses.

The article related to the keyword "macrophage and atherosclerosis" is still quite extensive, so to narrow the scope and adjust to the research objectives, the keyword is added with "signaling pathway." Entering the PubMed search box is: "[macrophage] AND atherosclerosis" AND (signaling pathway OR signaling pathway). The results obtained were 1830 articles consisting of 1425 journal articles and 405 reviews.

1425 article journals are downloaded and stored on the Zotero reference app. Then, to filter the scope of the signaling pathway again, in the Zotero search box, enter the keyword "signaling pathway" in the all fields, and tags menu with the aim that the signaling pathway in question can be filtered from the entire article content. The results obtained were 689 articles with these keywords.

A total of 689 articles were identified based on the type of testing performed, namely, preclinical or clinical. Initial identification was carried out by the abstract screening of each study. The results obtained were 672 preclinical articles and 14 clinical articles. A total of three of the 14 clinical articles obtained were excluded from the study, with the reason that one article used cadaveric/corpse as the subject, and the other two articles did not use a model or sample of patients with atherosclerotic conditions so that a total of 11 clinical articles were subjected to further analysis. The schematic of the article search process and the results are shown in Fig. 2 and the summary table of the research objectives and key conclusions is shown in Table 1.

Based on the flow of the clinical article search process related to biomarkers in macrophages in atherosclerotic conditions, 11 clinical articles that met the criteria were obtained. Furthermore, biomarker identification was carried out for each article. Biomarkers obtained based on the identification were 30 biomarkers associated with macrophages in atherosclerotic conditions.

Biomarkers related to inflammatory pathways expressed in plaque were reported by six studies [20,34-38]. Plaque rupture was reported in two studies [39] and [40]. Biomarkers related to metabolic pathways were reported in five studies [20,34,39,41,42]. Types of biomarkers are grouped based on functional gene groups in the body, namely: Lipoproteins and metabolic pathways; adhesion, inflammation, and cell surface antigens; coagulation; gene-linked receptors (extracellular signaling); transport protein; and cell survival. Classification of marker types based on functional class related to the formation process of atherosclerosis along with the reference to the clinical articles included in detail are shown in Table 2 (all markers are upregulated in atherosclerosis except that marked *). Summary of biomarker values and measurements is shown in Table 3.
Table 1: Summary of the research objectives and key conclusions

| Author, Reference | Background/Research purpose | Object | Key conclusion |
|-------------------|----------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Shi, 2015 [35]    | Evaluation of the expression of NLRP3 inflammasome in atherosclerosis carotid plaque and plaque susceptibility | NLRP3 inflammasome | • There is an association between the NLRP3 inflammasome and carotid atherosclerosis.  
• NLRP3, ASC, Caspase-1, IL-1β, IL-18: Association with plaque vulnerability and atherogenesis.  
• IL-1β, IL-18 as predictors of atherosclerosis |
| Watanabe, 2017 [37] | CAD patients have increased reactivation of varicella-zoster virus infection and herpes zoster  
The increase in age causes: memory loss of CD4 T cells with the virus, expression of PD-1 immunoinhibitory receptors.  
Macrophages in CAD patients increase ROS levels, causing a modification of the glycolytic enzyme pyruvate kinase M2 to result in increased IL1β and IL6 production (leading to cell disturbance)  
Objective: To see pyruvate control against PD-L1 inhibitor and T cell suppression | Ligan immunoinhibitory (PD-L1) | • The expression of NAMPT in PBMC and plasma of patients is higher than in normal patients  
• NAMPT/NAD+/Sirt1: up-regulation in ACS patients (due to increased e-NAMPT expression) |
| Zhang, 2016 [20]  | Monocytes and macrophages play an important role in the progression of atherosclerosis, but their activities are not fully known  
NAMPT is known to be present as a plaque component, but it is not known whether NAMPT is involved in the regulation of leukocytes in peripheral blood.  
Purpose: To see the effect of NAMPT on the polarization of macrophages related to the NAMPT pathway in atherosclerosis. | Level NAMPT in ACS patients, IL-1ra, IL-10 | • The expression of NAMPT in PBMC and plasma of patients is higher than in normal patients  
• NAMPT/NAD+/Sirt1: up-regulation in ACS patients (due to increased e-NAMPT expression) |
| Lee, 2013 [39]    | Resident macrophages have an important role in the rupture of atherosclerotic plaques, it is confirmed that there are genes expressed by macrophages.  
Objectives: To see the differences in the characteristics of gene expression in ruptured and stable plaques | FABP-4 (Fatty acid-binding protein), Leptin | • There are significant differences in gene expression produced in stable and ruptured plaques  
• There is increased expression of FABP4 and leptin in plaque  
• Down-regulation of PPAR/adipocytokine in plaque receiving potent therapy |
| Kang, 2010 [42]   | FOS gene expression, important in the function of monocytes and macrophages. Can be inhibited by statins through disruption of the cholesterol signaling pathway  
Purpose: to prove the hypothesis that blood FOS mRNA levels will be sensitive to statins in the treatment of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol levels. | FOS Expression in Blood as a low-density lipoprotein-Independent Marker of Statin Treatment | • Treatment with statins decreases FOS gene expression  
• FOS gene expression is sensitive to treatment with statins |
| Li, 2015 [43]     | Statin therapy has an important role in stabilizing plaque in patients with unstable angina, but the mechanism has not been much explored.  
Objective: Identification of microRNAs (miRNAs) to mediate the protective effect of statins in patients with unstable angina | Statins induce multiple miRNA expression in circulating patients with unstable angina, which indicates an important role in the regulation of the signaling pathway for pathogenesis of unstable angina (one of which is NGF signaling). |  
• Statins induce multiple miRNA expression in circulating patients with unstable angina, which indicates an important role in the regulation of the signaling pathway for pathogenesis of unstable angina (one of which is NGF signaling). |
Biomarkers expressed by atherosclerotic plaques included in a systematic review of clinical trials are presented in the form of a schematic image. The induction of chemotaxis is due to an inflammatory response that causes the transfer of monocytes in the blood to the tissues and turns into macrophages. Macrophages which are components of atherosclerotic plaques express several biomarkers, both in ruptured and non-ruptured plaques, as shown in Fig. 3.

The results of clinical trial studies indicate a role for macrophages in atherosclerotic conditions. Supported by the expressed biomarkers atherosclerotic plaques containing macrophages were found in this study. The grouping of biomarkers in the study was adjusted to functional gene groups in the body, from the six functional gene groups the most biomarkers were obtained in the adhesion, inflammation, and cell surface antigen groups, namely, 14 biomarkers. This is closely related to atherosclerosis which is basically an inflammatory condition due to the accumulation of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (particles on the artery walls [44,45].

All studies show mixed results regarding the biomarkers expressed by macrophages, it can be said that none of the studies in this systematic review have the same research results, but still support one another.

Studies [34] have shown that the presence of metabolic pathways (Acyl coenzyme A: cholesterol acyltransferase, Lysosomal acid lipase (LAL), caveolin-2, CD40, vascular endothelial growth factor-165 receptors, and tissue factor pathway inhibitors) are compatible with atherosclerotic conditions, which are a combination of metabolic processes and inflammation [46-48].

Macrophages are associated with effector function, including secretion of pro-inflammatory cytokines interleukin (IL)-1β and IL-180) [35], lipid uptake, cholesterol transport, and phagocytosis [49]. During the lipid uptake process, macrophages transform into foam cells and eventually undergo apoptosis [50,51] which is in line with the study results [40] showing the presence of caspase-3 expression in ruptured plaques. Macrophage apoptosis is the end result of the formation of

### Table 1: (Continued)

| Author, Reference | Background/Research purpose | Object | Key conclusion |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|--------|----------------|
| (Ng, 2003) [34]   | Men are more at risk of coronary disease than women. | Evaluation of the influence of androgens on men and women atherosclerosis | Androgens increase expression of gene-related atherosclerosis, in male macrophages |
|                   | Purpose: To identify the effect of androgens related to the expression of macrophage donor genes in men and women | | There are 6 genes associated with up-regulated atherosclerosis, namely: Acyl coenzyme A: cholesterol acyltransferase, Lysosomal acid lipase (LAL), caveolin-2, CD40, vascular endothelial growth factor-165 receptors, and tissue factor pathway inhibitors |
| (Dorweiler, 2014) [40] | Purpose: to analyze the expression of the marker signaling pathway for apoptosis and proapoptosis UPR (Unfolded Protein Response) in plaque rupture in the human carotid artery. | Caspase-3 | UPR proapoptotic signaling pathway activation identified in plaque rupture that occurs in the human carotid artery. |
| (Dunaeva, 2009) [36] | Objectives: evaluation of the expression of signaling Hedgehog (Hh) molecules and chemotactic activity of Sonic hedgehog (Shh) in monocytes of CAD patients with or without DM. | Shh, Ptc | Shh: induced monocyte chemotaxis, does not induce monocytes in CAD+DM patients |
| (Li, 2004) [38]   | Glucose in DM patients increases cardiovascular risk | LOX1 | Shh inhibition is thought to be pro-atherogenic |
|                   | Objective: to assess the regulation of LOX1 expression on MDM (human monocyte-derived macrophage) by high glucose and the role of LOX1 on glucose which induces foam cell formation. | | Strong Ptc receptors are expressed by macrophages on atherosclerotic plaques, Shh as induced chemotaxis with activating the signaling pathway |
| (Peltonen, 2009) [41] | Aortic valve stenosis (US): regulates the pathobiological process that shows some hallmarks (signs) of atherosclerosis | Apelin | Glucose induces macrophages by forming atherosclerotic foam cells, by increasing LOX1 receptor expression |
|                   | - Apelin and its receptor, APJ, are widely expressed in the heart. | | Aortic valve stenosis, characterized by inflammation, calcification, and angiogenesis, is highly significant in association with the up-regulation of the apelin-APJ receptor pathway being the basis for a potential drug target. |
|                   | - Objective: To determine the role of the apelin-APJ signaling pathway in aortic stenosis | | The endothelium, especially in the blood vessels, is the site for the expression of apelin in the aortic valves |
|                   | - Aortic stenosis is the narrowing of the aortic valve opening. Aortic stenosis restricts blood flow from the left ventricle to the aorta and can also affect the pressure in the left atrium. | | |
foam cells as an inflammatory response that is thought to accelerate the process of necrotic nucleation at a later stage [52,53].

At an advanced stage (advanced plaque), macrophages accumulate in the ruptured area. This results in macrophages thought to contribute to the thinning of the fibrous layer and destabilization of atherosclerotic plaque, a mechanism that is thought to be mediated by the secretion of matrix destabilizing matrix metalloproteinases (MMPs) [49,54,55]. However, in this study no information was obtained related to MMPs.

**IL-1β AND IL-18 AS PREDICTORS OF ATHEROSCLEROSIS**

Atherogenesis is a biological process that occurs on a molecular scale [56,57] so that molecularly targeted atherosclerosis treatment is still being developed [17,58-64]. Based on this systematic review biomarkers for the identification of atherosclerosis are proposed, namely IL-1β and IL-18 [35]. Based on statistical tests, it was reported that the plasma levels of IL-1β and IL-18 differed significantly in the conditions of atherosclerotic patients compared with controls. The

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### Table 2: Classification of marker types based on functional class

| Fungsional Gene              | Gene Name/Biomarkers                                      | Reference |
|------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|-----------|
| Lipoprotein and metabolic pathway | Acyl coenzyme A: cholesterol acyltransferase            | [34]      |
|                              | Lysosomal acid lipase                                    | [34]      |
|                              | Caveolin-2                                               | [34]      |
|                              | NAMPT (Nicotinamide phosphoribosyltransferase)          | [20]      |
|                              | Leptin                                                   | [39]      |
|                              | Heme-oxygenase (decyling) 1                              | [39]      |
|                              | Dehydrogenase/reductase (SDR family) member 9           | [39]      |
|                              | APELIN                                                   | [41]      |
|                              | FOS                                                      | [42]      |
| Adhesi, inflammation and cell surface antigen | CD-40                                                   | [34]      |
|                              | NLPR3                                                    | [35]      |
|                              | ASC (apoptosis-associated speck-like protein with a C-terminal caspase-recruitment domain) | [35]      |
|                              | CASPASE-1                                                | [35]      |
|                              | IL-1β                                                   | [35]      |
|                              | IL-18                                                   | [35]      |
|                              | IL-1ra                                                  | [20]      |
|                              | IL-10                                                   | [20]      |
|                              | PD-L1 (Program death ligan -1)                           | [37]      |
|                              | Preapoptotic caspase adaptor protein                     | [39]      |
|                              | Fc fragment of IgG, low affinity IIIa/b receptor (FGGR3AB) | [39]      |
|                              | CD38 antigen (p45)                                       | [39]      |
|                              | Immunoglobulin lambda joining 3                         | [39]      |
|                              | Shh*                                                     | [36]      |
| Coagulation                  | Tissue factor pathway inhibitor                          | [34]      |
| Gene-linked receptors (extracellular signaling) | Vascular endothelial cell growth factor 165 receptor     | [34]      |
|                              | PTC receptor                                             | [36]      |
|                              | L0X 1                                                   | [38]      |
| Protein transport            | Fatty acid binding protein 4 (FABP4)                    | [39]      |
| Cell survival                | NGF*                                                     | [43]      |
|                              | CASPASE 3                                                | [40]      |

IL: Interleukin
Table 3: Summary of biomarker values and measurements

| Functional Genes                          | Gene name/Biomarkers                                    | Normal Level | Atherosclerosis Level | Measurement                     | Number of Samples | Reference |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Lipoprotein and metabolic pathway        | Acyl coenzyme A: cholesterol acyltransferase           | 1-fold       | 5-fold                | RT-PCR                          | 2 males           | [34]      |
|                                          | Lysoosomal acid lipase                                 | 1-fold       | 3.8-fold              | RT-PCR                          | 2 females         | [34]      |
|                                          | Caveolin-2                                             | 1-fold       | 3.4-fold              | RT-PCR                          | 2 males; 2 females| [34]      |
|                                          | NAMPT (Nicotinamide phosphoribosyltransferase)         | 10-fold      | 60-80-fold            | RT-PCR                          | 61 ACS Patients (19 UAP; 22 NSTEMI; 20 STEMI)| [20]      |
|                                          | Leptin                                                 | -            | 6.61 (fold change)    | RT-PCR, Immunohistochemistry    | 20 Controls       | [39]      |
|                                          | Heme oxygenase (decycling) 1                           | -            | 6.02 (fold change)    | RT-PCR                          | 25 patients (12 unstable; 13 stable) | [39]      |
|                                          | Dehydrogenase/reductase (SDR family) member 9         | -            | 5.91 (fold change)    | RT-PCR                          | 25 patients (12 unstable; 13 stable) | [39]      |
|                                          | APETIN                                                 | 1-fold       | 3.6-fold (AS)         | RT-PCR, Histology               | 49 patients (9 AR/Aortic Regurgitation; 14 AR+fibrinolysis; 26 AS/Aortic Stenosis) | [41]      |
| Adhesion, inflammation and cell surface antigen | FOS                                                  | -            | 1-fold                | RT-PCR                          | 46 patients       | [42]      |
|                                          | CD-40                                                  | 1-fold       | 5.5-fold              | RT-PCR                          | 2 males           | [34]      |
|                                          | NLRP3                                                  | -            | 3.5 (relative)        | RT-PCR, Immunohistochemistry,   | 30 carotid atherosclerotic plaques patients (15 stable, 15 unstable) | [35]      |
|                                          | ASC (apoptosis-associated speck-like protein with a C-terminal caspase-recruitment domain) | -            | 2000 (relative)       | RT-PCR, Immunohistochemistry,   | 20 Controls       | [35]      |
|                                          | CASPASE - 1                                            | -            | 5000 (relative)       | RT-PCR, Immunohistochemistry,   | 20 Controls       | [35]      |
|                                          | IL- 1α                                                 | 12.000 pg/ml | 32.000 pg/ml          | ELISA                           | 30 carotid atherosclerotic plaques patients (15 stable, 15 unstable) | [35]      |
|                                          | IL- 18                                                 | 20.0 ng/l    | 340 ng/l              | ELISA                           | 20 Controls       | [35]      |
|                                          | IL-1ra                                                 | 100 pg/ml    | 300 pg/ml             | Bio-Plex pro human cytokine assay| 61 ACS Patients (19 UAP; 22 NSTEMI; 20 STEMI) | [20]      |
|                                          | IL-10                                                  | 50 pg/ml     | 150 pg/ml             | Bio-Plex pro human cytokine assay| 20 Controls       | [20]      |
|                                          | PD-L1 (Program death ligand -1)                       | 12.000 MFI   | 19.000 MFI            | Flow Cytometry                   | 34 CAD Patients   | [37]      |
|                                          | Preapoptotic caspase adaptor protein                   | -            | 12.79 (fold change)   | RT-PCR                          | 25 patients (12 unstable; 13 stable) | [39]      |
|                                          | Fc fragment of Ig, low affinity                        | -            | 7.55 (fold change)    | RT-PCR                          | 25 patients (12 unstable; 13 stable) | [39]      |
|                                          | Illa/b, receptor (FGFR3AB)                             | -            | 6.88 (fold change)    | RT-PCR                          | 25 patients (12 unstable; 13 stable) | [39]      |
|                                          | CD38 antigen (p45)                                    | -            | 5.42 (fold change)    | RT-PCR                          | 25 patients (12 unstable; 13 stable) | [39]      |
|                                          | Immunoglobulin lambda joining 3                        | -            | 134±44 (CAD-DM)       | Chemotaxis analysis              | 15 CAD+DM         | [36]      |
|                                          | Shh                                                    | 172.5±90%    | 94.3±27 (CAD+DM)      | Chemotaxis analysis              | 15 CAD+DM         | [36]      |

(Contd...)
Support data from preclinical research [65] that generated mice lacking both apoE and IL-1β. The sizes of atherosclerotic lesions at the aortic sinus in apoE−/−/IL-1β−/− mice at 12 and 24 weeks of age showed a significant decrease of approximately 30% compared with apoE−/−/IL-1β−/− mice, and the percentage of the atherosclerotic area to total area of apoE−/−/IL-1β−/− at 24 weeks of age also showed a significant decrease of about 30% compared with apoE−/−/IL-1β−/−. The mRNA levels of vascular cell adhesion molecule (VCAM)-1 and monocyte chemotactic protein-1 in the apoE−/−/IL-1β−/− aorta were significantly reduced compared with the apoE−/−/IL-1β−/−. Furthermore, VCAM-1 was also reduced at the protein level in apoE−/−/IL-1β−/− aorta compared with apoE−/−/IL-1β−/−. The lack of IL-1β decreases the severity of atherosclerosis in apoE deficient mice, possibly through increased expressions of VCAM-1 and monocyte chemotactic protein-1 in the aorta.

The other study in vivo [66], XMA052 MG1K, a chimeric murine version of XOMA 052, inhibited the formation of atherosclerotic lesions in the ApoE−/−/− model at all three doses tested. This effect was comparable to that reported for complete genetic ablation of IL-1β or IL-1R1 on an ApoE−/−/− background and was associated with decreases in plasma non-HDL/HDL cholesterol ratio and plaque lipid content and macrophage infiltration, demonstrate for the 1st time that an antibody targeting IL-1β can inhibit the progression of atherosclerosis in vivo, highlighting the importance of this key cytokine in cardiovascular disease [67-70].

Study of IL-18 in prineclial [79] demonstrated that lack of endogenous IFN-γ ablated the effects of IL-18 on atherosclerosis, IL-18 in the atherogenic process [80-93] increases lesion development through enhancement of an inflammatory response involving an IFN-γ-dependent mechanism [94,95].

**LOX-1 AS A TARGET FOR Atherosclerosis THERAPY**

The proposed potential target therapy for the treatment of atherosclerotic conditions is LOX-1 which is a study conducted by Li et al. [38], supported by Xu et al. [96] who stated that LOX-1 is involved in endothelial dysfunction, monocyte adhesion, proliferation, migration, and apoptosis of smooth muscle cells, foam cell formation, platelet activation, and plaque instability; these are all very important in the pathogenesis of atherosclerosis [97-102]. This LOX-1-dependent biological process contributes to plaque instability and the final clinical sequela of life-threatening plaque rupture and tissue ischemia. LOX-1 antagonists are thought to inhibit atherosclerosis by reducing these cellular events.

Over the past decade, many drugs including natural antioxidants, statins, anti-inflammatory agents, antihypertensive, and antihyperglycemic drugs have been shown to inhibit LOX-1 vascular expression and activity. Therefore, LOX-1 is an attractive therapeutic target to be developed in the atherosclerotic treatment in humans [96].

Thus, the complexity of atherosclerotic conditions is supported by 30 biomarkers resulting from 11 clinical trials with macrophages as the main component of atherosclerotic plaque. All test results did not show the same results but were closely related to another.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The clinical studies included in this systematic review fit the criteria related to the identification of biomarkers in macrophages in...
atherosclerotic conditions, resulting in a total of 11 clinical trials. The identification resulted in 30 biomarkers which were presented in the form of a schematic image. The proposed biomarkers of atherosclerosis are IL-1β and IL-18, while the proposed potential targets for atherosclerosis therapy are LOX-1.

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION
All the authors have contributed to the preparation and editing of this systematic review article.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST
The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

AUTHORS FUNDING
Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia, 2019

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