

Roles of *Trypanosoma cruzi* calreticulin in parasite-host interactions and in tumor growth

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In Latin America, there are about 10-12 million people infected with *Trypanosoma cruzi*, the agent of Chagas' disease, one of the most important neglected tropical parasitism. Identification of molecular targets, specific for the aggressor or host cells or both, may be useful in the development of pharmacological and/or immunological therapeutic tools. Classic efforts in Chagas' disease explore those strategies. Although the immune system frequently controls parasite aggressions, sterile immunity is seldom achieved and chronic interactions are thus established. However, laboratory-modified immunologic probes aimed at selected parasite targets, may be more effective than their unmodified counterparts. Calreticulin (CRT) from vertebrates is a calcium binding protein, present mainly in the endoplasmic reticulum (ER), where it directs the conformation of proteins and controls calcium levels. We have isolated, gene-cloned, expressed and characterized *T. cruzi* calreticulin (TcCRT). Upon infec