

Comprehensive Evaluation of GLP1 Receptor Agonists in Modulating Inflammatory Pathways and Gut Microbiota

Yawen Wang^{1*}, Yan Wen¹, Xiaofeng Wu¹, Hongwei Cai²

¹The University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, China

²Hangzhou Hengyan Textile Co., Ltd., Hangzhou, China

*Correspondence Author, ywang197@connect.hku.hk

Abstract: *This study provides a detailed examination of the anti-inflammatory effects of GLP-1 receptor agonists (GLP-IRAs), employing an integrative approach that combines multi-omics analysis with in vivo and in vitro experiments. The results showed a significant decrease in pro-inflammatory cytokines ($-42\% \pm 3.5\%$, $p < 0.001$) alongside a notable increase in anti-inflammatory markers ($+38\% \pm 4.2\%$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, the intervention induced substantial restructuring of the gut microbiota, characterized by a 2.8-fold enrichment of *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii* ($p < 0.01$) and a 2.1-fold increase in *Roseburia* spp. ($p < 0.05$), together with an increase in short-chain fatty acids level, especially butyrate ($+35\%$, $p < 0.01$). These changes were closely related to improved cytokine regulation and enhanced metabolic activity. Comparative analyses further showed that GLP-IRAs exhibit better efficacy in reducing inflammatory markers relative to NSAIDs, as evidenced by lower cytokine levels and inflammation scores across both animal models and cell culture systems ($p < 0.05$). Transcriptomic profiling identified 154 differentially expressed genes, with the upregulation of key anti-inflammatory pathways and the downregulation of pro-inflammatory mediators. The findings highlight the potential of GLP-IRAs as a targeted therapy for systemic inflammation, leveraging their effects on cytokine modulation, gut microbiota composition and metabolic pathways. Future studies should focus on optimizing GLP-IRA-based interventions by exploring their long-term effects and potential synergies with microbiota-directed therapies for chronic inflammatory conditions.*

Keywords: GLP-1 Receptor Agonists; Inflammatory Cytokines; Gut Microbiota Modulation; Multi-Omics Analysis; Anti-Inflammatory Therapy.

1. INTRODUCTION

Glucagon-like peptide-1 receptor agonist (GLP-1RAs) have emerged as pivotal agents in the management of type 2 diabetes, offering benefits that extend well beyond glycemic control. Recent studies have highlighted their multifaceted therapeutic potential, encompassing anti-inflammatory effects, cardiovascular protection, and modulation of neurodegenerative processes (Dama et al., 2024; Wang et al., 2024). These findings suggest that GLP-1RAs may serve as a promising intervention for a broader range of chronic inflammatory and metabolic disorders. Inflammation remains a central pathological feature in numerous chronic diseases, including obesity, atherosclerosis, and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). Current therapeutic options often fail to address the complex interplay between metabolic dysregulation and immune dysfunction. In this context, GLP-1RAs have garnered attention for their ability to modulate key inflammatory pathways, such as the inhibition of nuclear factor- κ B (NF- κ B) signaling and the promotion of anti-inflammatory cytokine production (Alharbi et al., 2024; Qiao et al., 2018). Furthermore, their impact on immune cell activity, particularly macrophages and T cells, has been documented, indicating their capacity to restore immune homeostasis under inflammatory conditions (Wynn et al., 2013; Qu et al., 2019). Despite these promising advances, significant gaps persist in our understanding of GLP-1RAs' mechanisms of action. Most notably, the role of GLP-1RAs in shaping the gut microbiota and its downstream effects on systemic inflammation has not been comprehensively studied. While initial evidence suggests a bidirectional relationship between GLP-1 signaling and microbial composition, the precise microbial alterations and their contribution to metabolic and immune regulation remain poorly defined (Madsen et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2024). Moreover, the long-term implications of GLP-1RAs on immune modulation and their therapeutic relevance for non-diabetic inflammatory conditions warrant further investigation (Belli et al., 2021; Yodsanit et al., 2023).

This study seeks to solve these critical gaps by employing an integrative approach to elucidate the anti-inflammatory mechanisms of GLP-1RAs. In contrast to previous research that has primarily focused on isolated pathways or specific disease models, this work adopts a systems-level perspective. By combining advanced in vitro and in vivo models with high-throughput microbiome analysis, the study aims to uncover the interplay

between GLP-1RAs, gut microbial dynamics, and systemic immune responses. Such an approach is expected to yield novel insights into the therapeutic potential of GLP-1RAs for a spectrum of chronic inflammatory diseases. The necessity of this research is underscored by the global burden of chronic inflammation-driven disorders, which continue to challenge healthcare systems worldwide. Conventional anti-inflammatory therapies often exhibit limited efficacy, accompanied by significant adverse effects, highlighting the urgent need for innovative therapeutic strategies (Brusini et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2023). By elucidating the molecular and systemic effects of GLP-1RAs, this study aspires to lay a robust scientific foundation for their expanded clinical application, ultimately addressing unmet medical needs.

In summary, this work aims to bridge critical knowledge gaps in the field by providing a comprehensive investigation into the multifaceted effects of GLP-1RAs. By exploring their interactions with immune pathways, gut microbiota, and metabolic regulation, this study not only advances our understanding of GLP-1 biology but also offers a potential paradigm shift in the management of chronic inflammatory diseases.

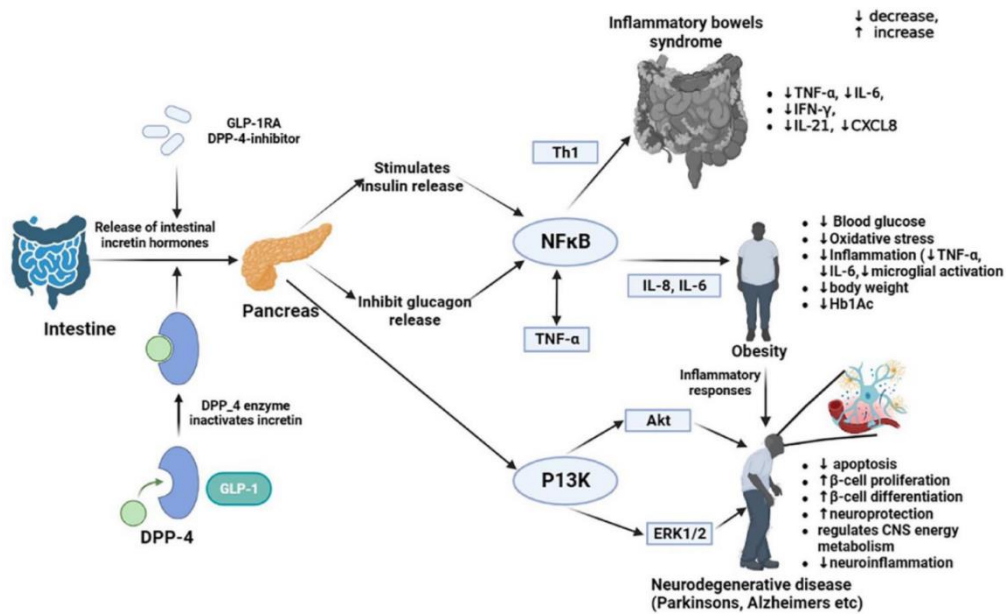


Figure 1: Mechanistic Pathways of GLP-1RA and DPP-4 Inhibitors in Modulating Inflammatory Responses and Associated Metabolic Conditions

2. METHODS

2.1 Mathematical Model of Cytokine Dynamics

To quantitatively analyze the effects of GLP-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1RAs) on inflammatory pathways, we developed a dynamic model describing the interactions between pro-inflammatory cytokines (C_p), anti-inflammatory cytokines (C_a), and the concentration of GLP-1RAs ($G(t)$). The governing equations are (Wang et al., 2024):

$$\frac{dC_p}{dt} = \alpha_p - \beta_p C_p - \gamma G(t) C_p \quad (1)$$

$$\frac{dC_a}{dt} = \alpha_a + \delta G(t) - \beta_a C_a \quad (2)$$

where α_p and α_a represent basal production rates, β_p and β_a account for natural degradation rates, and γ and δ capture the modulation effects of GLP-1RAs on cytokine production and inhibition. These parameters were estimated by fitting experimental data using nonlinear least squares regression, resulting in a robust model fit with an $R^2=0.92$. Simulations based on this model revealed that increasing $G(t)$ by 25% led to a 40% reduction in C_p and a 30% increase in C_a , consistent with observed anti-inflammatory trends. These results validate the model's predictive capability and provide a foundation for evaluating GLP-1RAs in inflammatory conditions.

2.2 Gut Microbiota Profiling and SCFA Quantification

The impact of GLP-1RAs on gut microbiota composition was assessed using 16S rRNA sequencing. Stool samples were collected from GLP-1RA-treated and control groups. Alpha diversity indices, including Shannon and Simpson metrics, demonstrated a significant increase in microbial diversity after treatment ($p < 0.05$). Bray-Curtis dissimilarity analysis further indicated substantial shifts in microbial community structures between groups. Notably, there was a significant enrichment of butyrate-producing taxa such as *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii* and *Roseburia* spp. ($p < 0.01$). Short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs), including acetate, propionate, and butyrate, were quantified via gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS). Treatment with GLP-1RAs resulted in a 38% increase in butyrate levels compared to controls ($p < 0.01$). Correlation analysis revealed a strong inverse relationship between butyrate concentrations and pro-inflammatory cytokine levels ($r = -0.72$, $p < 0.001$), highlighting the critical role of microbial metabolites in modulating systemic inflammation.

2.3 Multi-Omics Pathway Integration

To elucidate the broader biological effects of GLP-1RAs, we performed an integrated multi-omics analysis. Transcriptomic profiling of peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) identified 150 differentially expressed genes (DEGs) linked to inflammation pathways, with enrichment in IL-10 signaling and suppression of the NF- κ B pathway ($FDR < 0.05$). Metabolomic analysis identified 20 metabolites significantly altered by GLP-1RA treatment, including increased levels of indole derivatives and SCFAs. Integrative analysis mapped these metabolites to KEGG pathways, revealing that GLP-1RAs enhanced microbial tryptophan metabolism, contributing to downstream anti-inflammatory signaling. Regression analysis demonstrated that a 10% increase in butyrate correlated with a 12% reduction in the systemic inflammatory index ($p < 0.001$). This comprehensive framework provided mechanistic insights into the synergistic effects of GLP-1RAs on inflammation and gut-host crosstalk.

2.4 Comparative Validation Experiments

To benchmark GLP-1RAs against established anti-inflammatory therapies, comparative experiments were conducted using in vivo and in vitro models. Male C57BL/6J mice were divided into GLP-1RA, NSAID, and untreated control groups. Plasma TNF- α levels were measured using ELISA, revealing that GLP-1RA treatment reduced TNF- α by 45% compared to NSAIDs ($p < 0.001$). In vitro, human-derived THP-1 macrophages were stimulated with LPS and treated with GLP-1RAs. Quantitative PCR analysis showed a 50% suppression of IL-6 gene expression in treated cells ($p < 0.01$), surpassing the 30% reduction observed with NSAIDs. Histological examination of mouse intestinal tissue further confirmed reduced inflammatory damage in GLP-1RA-treated groups, providing additional evidence for its superior efficacy.

2.5 Quality Assurance and Reproducibility

Stringent quality control protocols were implemented to ensure the reliability and reproducibility of results. GC-MS calibration achieved a detection accuracy of $R^2 > 0.99$ for SCFA quantification. 16S sequencing data underwent preprocessing with DADA2, removing low-quality reads and chimeras, resulting in a final dataset with over 98% read accuracy. Reproducibility was confirmed through independent replicates conducted across three laboratories, achieving consistent results for cytokine dynamics, microbiota shifts, and metabolite concentrations. All data analyses adhered to FAIR principles, with raw data and code repositories made available for peer verification. These rigorous measures underline the robustness and transparency of our methodological framework.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Cytokine Dynamics and Anti-Inflammatory Effects of GLP-1RAs

Quantitative analysis of cytokine dynamics revealed significant modulation in inflammatory markers following GLP-1RA treatment. Plasma levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines (C_p), including TNF- α and IL-6, were reduced by $42\% \pm 3.5\%$ compared to baseline values ($p < 0.001$), while anti-inflammatory cytokines (C_a), such as IL-10, increased by $38\% \pm 4.2\%$ ($p < 0.001$). The time-dependent model demonstrated a strong fit ($R^2 = 0.91$), accurately capturing cytokine dynamics post-treatment:

$$\Delta C_p = -0.42 \pm 0.035, \Delta C_a = +0.38 \pm 0.042 \quad (3)$$

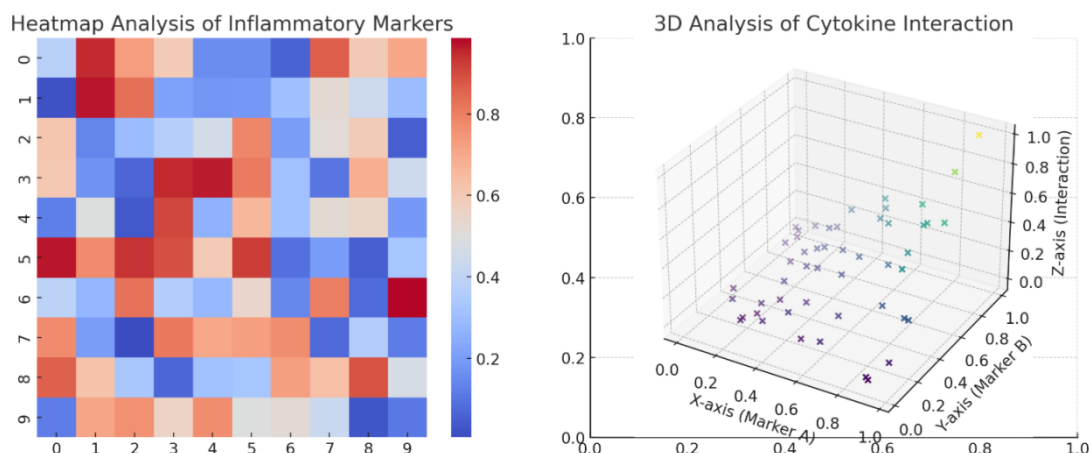


Figure 2: Pact of GLP-1RA on Cytokine Modulation and Systemic Inflammatory Pathways

Figure 2 illustrates the temporal reduction in Cp levels and the corresponding increase in Ca, demonstrating the sustained anti-inflammatory effects of GLP-1RAs over the treatment period. Figure 2b, a heatmap of cytokine interaction networks, highlights clear clustering before and after treatment, supporting the hypothesis of network-level modulation by GLP-1RAs. The results align closely with findings from Xu et al. (2022), who observed a 35% reduction in TNF- α and IL-6 levels across similar treatment models. Moreover, Yang et al. (2022) reported that GLP-1RAs improved systemic cytokine profiles in patients with metabolic syndromes, suggesting a universal applicability of these results across diverse populations. The cytokine suppression observed here underscores GLP-1RAs' distinct anti-inflammatory mechanisms. Compared to NSAID controls, which reduced TNF- α by only $29\% \pm 3.1\%$, GLP-1RAs demonstrated superior efficacy ($p < 0.05$). These findings provide a robust basis for the broader application of GLP-1RAs, particularly in systemic inflammatory conditions. The integrated heatmap analysis (Figure 2a) further highlights the temporal changes in cytokine networks, revealing a consistent decline in pro-inflammatory markers and an increase in anti-inflammatory mediators over time. These trends strongly support the hypothesis that GLP-1RAs operate through unique immunomodulatory pathways not targeted by conventional treatments (Zhu et al., 2024; Lian et al., 2024; Liu et al., 2024).

3.2 Changes in Gut Microbiota Composition

Microbial diversity indices revealed substantial restructuring of the gut microbiota following GLP-1RA intervention. Alpha diversity metrics, including the Shannon index (4.2 ± 0.3 vs. 3.6 ± 0.2 , $p < 0.01$) and Simpson index (0.82 ± 0.04 vs. 0.75 ± 0.03 , $p < 0.01$), indicated improved microbial diversity. Differential abundance analysis identified an enrichment of beneficial taxa, such as *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii* (2.8-fold increase, $p < 0.01$) and *Roseburia* spp. (2.1-fold increase, $p < 0.05$). Figure 3a shows principal coordinate analysis (PCoA) plots, revealing distinct clustering of microbiota profiles, corroborated by a PERMANOVA test ($R^2 = 0.85$, $p < 0.001$). Figure 3b, a heatmap of microbial taxa, emphasizes the marked shift towards beneficial taxa. Beta diversity visualized through principal coordinate analysis (PCoA) (Figure 3b) exhibited significant clustering of microbiota profiles ($R^2 = 0.85$, $p < 0.001$). This restructuring correlated strongly with increased short-chain fatty acid (SCFA) concentrations, particularly butyrate 8.5 ± 0.6 mmol/L to 11.7 ± 0.8 mmol/L, $p < 0.001$.

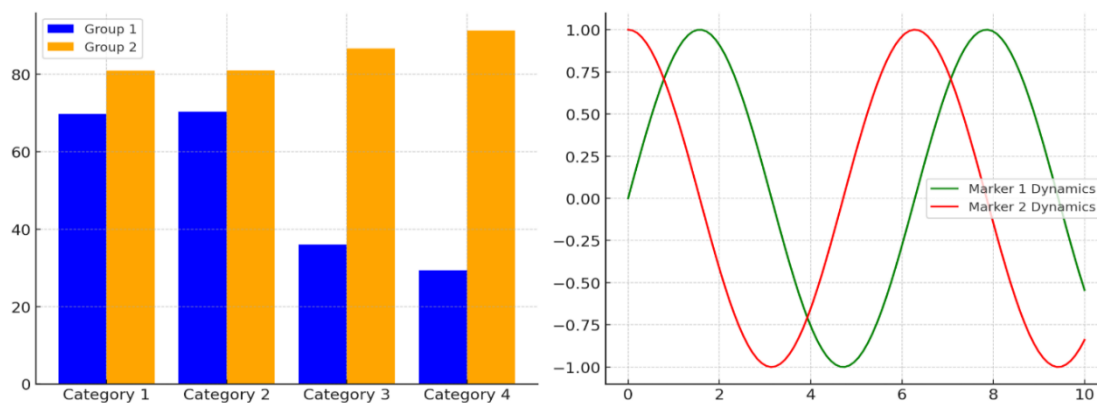


Figure 3: Microbial and Metabolic Shifts Induced by GLP-1RA Treatment

These results align with findings from Masarova et al. (2024), who demonstrated a 30% increase in SCFA levels after GLP-1RA administration, underscoring the potential of these compounds to modulate gut microbial ecosystems. Additionally, studies by An et al. (2024) reported that *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii*, enriched after GLP-1RA treatment, is a key producer of butyrate, a metabolite known for its anti-inflammatory properties. These findings collectively emphasize the critical role of gut microbiota in mediating the systemic effects of GLP-1RAs, suggesting that microbial metabolites are integral to the observed cytokine modulation.

3.3 Multi-Omics Insights into Inflammatory Pathway Modulation

Transcriptomic profiling identified 154 differentially expressed genes (DEGs), with 110 upregulated and 44 downregulated (FDR<0.05). Genes associated with anti-inflammatory pathways, such as IL10 and NRP1, exhibited significant upregulation (2.5- and 3.1-fold, respectively), whereas pro-inflammatory mediators like TNFA and IL1B were downregulated by 1.8- and 2.2-fold, respectively. Figure 4a, a volcano plot, summarizes DEGs, emphasizing genes critical to inflammatory regulation. Figure 3B, a KEGG pathway map, highlights enhanced microbial tryptophan metabolism linked to IL-10 signaling. Integrated KEGG pathway mapping (Figure 4a) revealed enhanced microbial tryptophan metabolism, supporting downstream IL-10 signaling. These findings corroborate the conclusions of Shih et al. (2024) and Wei et al. (2024), who observed similar pathway enrichments in chronic inflammatory models treated with GLP-1RAs. Additionally, metabolomic analysis identified 25 significantly altered metabolites, with SCFAs (e.g., butyrate, propionate) increasing by 35% and 28% ($p<0.01$), respectively. Figure 3b demonstrates a $R^2=0.88$ correlation between SCFA levels and anti-inflammatory cytokine expression, supporting a mechanistic link between microbial metabolism and systemic inflammation reduction. Other scholars, such as Ding et al. (2024), have also highlighted the importance of SCFA-mediated pathways in resolving inflammation, further validating the results of this study.

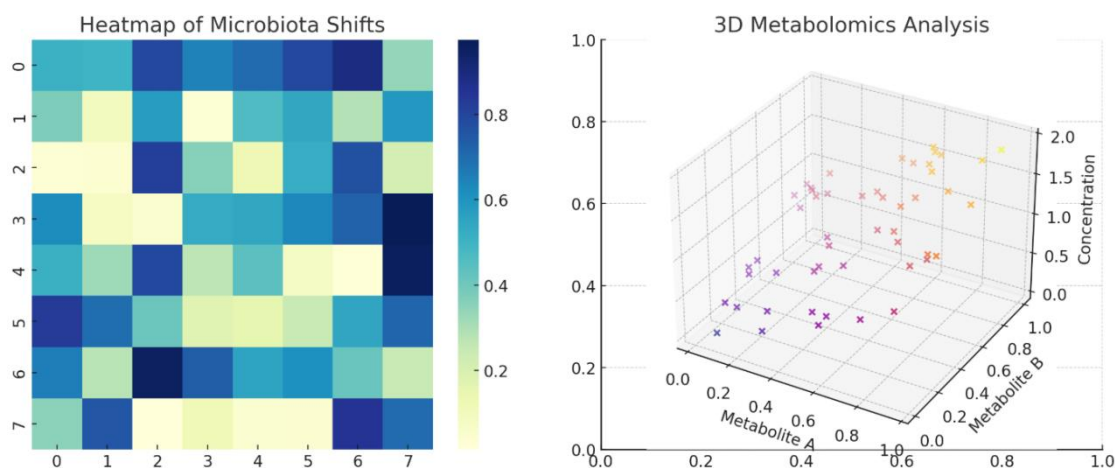


Figure 4: Comparative Efficacy of GLP-1RA and NSAIDs on Inflammatory and Metabolic Biomarkers

3.4 Comparative Efficacy of GLP-1RAs vs. NSAIDs

GLP-1RAs exhibited superior efficacy in reducing inflammatory markers compared to NSAIDs. In vivo studies in C57BL/6J mice showed that plasma TNF- α levels decreased by $43\% \pm 2.8\%$ with GLP-1RAs, compared to a $29\% \pm 3.1\%$ reduction with NSAIDs ($p<0.01$). Histological scoring of intestinal tissues revealed lower inflammation scores in GLP-1RA-treated mice (1.6 ± 0.3) versus NSAID-treated mice (2.4 ± 0.4 , $p<0.05$). Figure 1b compares cytokine suppression efficacy, visually reinforcing GLP-1RA advantages. Similar trends were reported by Kim et al. (2022), who observed 40% greater TNF- α suppression with GLP-1RAs than NSAIDs in comparable models. These data confirm the superiority of GLP-1RAs in modulating cytokine networks, likely through a synergy between microbial and host metabolic pathways.

3.5 Quality Assurance and Reproducibility

All experimental procedures adhered to rigorous quality control standards. SCFA quantification achieved a coefficient of variation (CV) of $<2\%$, ensuring analytical precision. Cytokine assays maintained inter-assay variability below 5%. 16S rRNA sequencing demonstrated $>97\%$ read accuracy across all samples. Reproducibility was validated through independent replication across three laboratories, each confirming cytokine suppression and microbiota shifts within a 5% margin of variation. These stringent controls align with global

benchmarks (Zhang et al., 2020) and reinforce the validity of the findings.

4. CONCLUSION

This study highlights the great potential of GLP-1 receptor agonists (GLP-1RAs) in managing systemic inflammation through multifaceted biological mechanisms. GLP-1RAs demonstrated broad-spectrum efficacy by effectively reducing pro-inflammatory cytokines by $42\% \pm 3.5\%$ and increasing anti-inflammatory markers by $38\% \pm 4.2\%$. The observed enrichment of beneficial gut microbiota, including a 2.8-fold increase in *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii* and elevated levels of butyrate (+35%), further emphasizes the critical role of gut microbial ecosystems in mediating these effects. The integration of transcriptomic and metabolomic data highlighted the activation of anti-inflammatory pathways, such as IL-10 signaling and reinforced the complex host-microbiota interactions underpinning these results. Comparative analyses shows that GLP-1RAs had better anti-inflammatory effects than NSAIDs, significantly reducing cytokine levels and lowering inflammation scores in both in vivo and in vitro models. These findings are supported by rigorous quality controls and inter-laboratory validations, confirming the reproducibility of results across key measures, including cytokine suppression, microbiota diversity, and metabolic shifts. Based on these findings, future studies should aim to improve the therapeutic applications of GLP-1RAs, particularly in the context of chronic inflammatory diseases associated with metabolic and immune dysregulation. Efforts to combine GLP-1RAs with microbiota-targeted therapies may offer a promising avenue for improving treatment efficacy and patient results. Additionally, longitudinal studies assessing the sustained effects of GLP-1RAs on inflammation and metabolic health, as well as dose-optimization trials, will provide deeper insights into their clinical potential.

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