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(54) Title: AUTOANTIGEN AND PROTEINS STRUCTURALLY RELATED THERETO FOR USE IN IMMUNOTHERAPY OF AUTOIMMUNE DISEASES

(57) Abstract

The present invention relates to the use of autoantigen HC gp-39, and proteins comprising an amino acid sequence which exhibits at least 50 % homology with the amino acid sequence of HC gp-39, more particular with the amino acid sequence YKLVCYYTSWSQYREGDGSCFPDALDR-FLCTHIIYSFANISND (SEQ ID NO:1) in antigen-specific treatment of articular cartilage destruction in autoimmune diseases in mammals to induce systemic tolerance of the immune system. The autoantigen HC gp-39, and the arthritogenic proteins comprising an amino acid sequence which exhibits at least 50 % homology with the amino acid sequence YKLVCYYTSWSQYREGDGSCFPDALDR-FLCTHIIYSFANISND (SEQ ID NO:1) are also suitable to induce arthritis in animals, preferably mice. The invention furthermore relates to pharmaceutical compositions comprising said autoantigen and/or said arthritogenic proteins, a diagnostic method for the detection of autoreactive T cells in a test sample and test kits to be used in said method.