CLAIMS

1. Use of a CD24 protein in the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, wherein the CD24 protein comprises the sequence of mature human CD24, or a variant thereof, and wherein the mature human CD24 consists of SEQ ID NO: 1.

2. Use of a CD24 protein as claimed in claim 1, wherein the CD24 protein comprises the extracellular domain of human CD24, which is fused to the N-terminal end of the mature CD24.

3. Use of a CD24 protein as claimed in claim 2, wherein the extracellular domain consists of the sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4.

4. Use of a CD24 protein as claimed in claim 1, wherein the CD24 protein is soluble.

5. Use of a CD24 protein as claimed in claim 1, wherein the CD24 protein is glycosylated.

6. Use of a CD24 protein as claimed in claim 1, wherein the CD24 protein further comprises a portion of a mammalian immunoglobulin (Ig), which is fused to the N-terminus or C-terminus of the mature CD24.

7. Use of a CD24 protein as claimed in claim 6, wherein the Ig is the Fc portion of a human Ig protein.

8. Use of a CD24 protein as claimed in claim 7, wherein the Fc portion consists of the hinge region and CH2 and CH3 domains of the human Ig protein, and wherein the Ig is selected from the group consisting of IgG1, IgG2, IgG3, IgG4 and IgA.

9. Use of a CD24 protein as claimed in claim 7, wherein the Fc portion consists of the hinge region CH3 and CH4 domains of IgM.

10. Use of a CD24 protein as claimed in claim 1, wherein the CD24 protein is produced using a eukaryotic protein expression system.

11. Use of a CD24 protein as claimed in claim 10, wherein the expression system comprises a vector contained in a Chinese Hamster Ovary cell line or a replication-defective retroviral vector.

12. Use of a CD24 protein as claimed in claim 11, wherein the replication-defective retroviral vector is stably integrated into the genome of the eukaryotic cell.

CLAIMS

1. A CD24 protein comprising the sequence of a mature human CD24 consisting of SEQ ID NO: 1.

2. A CD24 protein as claimed in claim 1, wherein the CD24 protein comprises the extracellular domain of human CD24, which is fused to the N-terminal end of the mature CD24.

3. A CD24 protein as claimed in claim 2, wherein the extracellular domain consists of the sequence of SEQ ID NO: 4.

4. A CD24 protein as claimed in claim 1, wherein the CD24 protein is soluble.

5. A CD24 protein as claimed in claim 1, wherein the CD24 protein is glycosylated.

6. A CD24 protein as claimed in claim 1, wherein the CD24 protein further comprises an Fc portion of a mammalian immunoglobulin (Ig), which is fused to the N-terminus or C-terminus of the mature CD24.

7. A CD24 protein as claimed in claim 6, wherein the Ig is the Fc portion of a human Ig protein.

8. A CD24 protein as claimed in claim 7, wherein the Fc portion consists of the hinge region and CH2 and CH3 domains of the human Ig protein, and wherein the Ig is selected from the group consisting of IgG1, IgG2, IgG3, IgG4 and IgA.

9. A CD24 protein as claimed in claim 7, wherein the Fc portion consists of the hinge region CH3 and CH4 domains of IgM.

10. A CD24 protein as claimed in claim 1, wherein the CD24 protein is produced using a eukaryotic protein expression system.

11. A CD24 protein as claimed in claim 10, wherein the expression system comprises a vector contained in a Chinese Hamster Ovary cell line or a replication-defective retroviral vector.

12. A CD24 protein as claimed in claim 11, wherein the replication-defective retroviral vector is stably integrated into the genome of the eukaryotic cell.