

Disintegrins are a family of small proteins (45–84 amino acids in length) from viper venoms that function as potent inhibitors of both platelet aggregation and integrin-dependent cell adhesion.

Disintegrins work by countering the blood clotting steps, inhibiting the clumping of platelets. They interact with the beta-1 and -3 families of integrins receptors. Integrins are cell receptors involved in cell-cell and cell-extracellular matrix interactions, serving as the final common pathway leading to aggregation via formation of platelet-platelet bridges, which are essential in thrombosis and haemostasis. Disintegrins contain an RGD (Arg-Gly-Asp) or KGD (Lys-Gly-Asp) sequence motif that binds specifically to integrin IIb-IIIa receptors on the platelet surface, thereby blocking the binding of fibrinogen to the receptor-glycoprotein complex of activated platelets. Disintegrins act as receptor antagonists, inhibiting aggregation induced by ADP, thrombin, platelet-activating factor and collagen.

The role of disintegrin in preventing blood coagulation renders it of medical interest, particularly with regard to its use as an anti-coagulant.

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