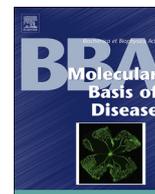




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## Hydrogen sulfide attenuates oxidative stress-induced NLRP3 inflammasome activation via S-sulphydrating c-Jun at Cys269 in macrophages

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### ABSTRACT

Oxidative stress and inflammation are closely related to cardiovascular diseases. Although hydrogen sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S) has been shown to have powerful anti-oxidative and anti-inflammatory properties, its role in macrophage inflammation was poorly understood. The aim of this study was to investigate the role of H<sub>2</sub>S in the regulation of macrophage NLRP3 inflammasome activation. We reported here that H<sub>2</sub>S attenuated hydrogen peroxide (H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>)-induced NLRP3 inflammasome activation, which led to caspase-1 activation and IL-1 $\beta$  production in macrophages. Moreover, H<sub>2</sub>S exerted its protective effects by lowering the generation of mitochondrial reactive oxygen species (mtROS). Mechanistically, S-sulphydrating of c-Jun by H<sub>2</sub>S enhanced its transcriptional activity on SIRT3 and p62, which contributed to the decrease of mtROS production. S-sulphydrating sites are investigated by site directed mutagenesis. Findings showed that S-sulphydrated c-Jun exerted its protective influences via a c-Jun Cys269-dependent manner. Moreover, the protective effects of H<sub>2</sub>S were absent in macrophage from SIRT3 knockout mice. In conclusion, these results demonstrate that H<sub>2</sub>S attenuates oxidative stress-induced mtROS production and NLRP3 inflammasome activation via S-sulphydrating c-Jun at cysteine 269 in macrophages.

### 1. Introduction

Cardiovascular diseases and their consequences are the most serious health problems worldwide [1]. In general, oxidative stress and inflammation are closely related to cardiovascular diseases, including atherosclerosis, ischemia-reperfusion injury, cardiomyopathy, and heart failure [2,3]. Moreover, the concept of oxidative stress and chronic inflammation as part of the pathophysiology of cardiovascular diseases has been accepted [4]. The excessive increase in reactive oxygen species (ROS) generation is pivotal in the progression of cardiovascular diseases [5,6]. Monocytes/macrophages are involved in the pathogenesis of atherosclerosis, aortic aneurysm, and heart diseases [7–11]. Additionally, monocytes/macrophages have been found to be diagnostic, prognostic, or therapeutic targets in cardiovascular diseases

[7,12]. Macrophage infiltration and oxidative stress play a vital role in the progression of cardiovascular diseases [4,13–16].

The NLRP3 inflammasome is composed of the NLRP3(NACHT, LRR and PYD domains-containing protein 3), the adaptor protein ASC (apoptosis-associated speck-like protein containing a CARD), and caspase-1 [17]. The activation of caspase-1 by NLRP3 inflammasome contributes to the processing and secretion of the proinflammatory cytokines IL-1 $\beta$  and IL-18, which contribute to the so-called sterile inflammation response [18,19]. To date, several studies have indicated that NLRP3 inflammasome is activated through three possible pathways, including reactive oxygen species (ROS), intracellular potassium (K<sup>+</sup>) concentration, and the disruption of the lysosomal membrane [20,21]. Macrophage NLRP3 inflammasome activation has been suggested to be involved in cardiovascular diseases [22–28].

**Abbreviations:** ANOVA, analysis of variance; BMM, bone marrow-derived macrophages; BSA, bovine serum albumin; CVD, cardiovascular diseases; DAPI, 4',6-diamidino-2-phenylindole; DMSO, dimethyl sulphoxide; DHE, dihydroethidium; EDTA, ethylenediaminetetraacetic acid; FBS, fetal bovine serum; HEPES, 4-(2-hydroxyethyl)-1-piperazineethanesulfonic acid; H<sub>2</sub>S, Hydrogen sulfide; H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, Hydrogen peroxide; HRP, horseradish peroxidase; IL-1 $\beta$ , interleukin-1 $\beta$ ; M-CSF, macrophage colony-stimulating factor; MMTS, methyl methaniosulfonate; mtROS, mitochondrial reactive oxygen species; NLRP3, NLR family pyrin domain containing 3; PBS, phosphate buffered solution; p62, sequestosome 1; PMA, 4 $\beta$ -phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate; PVDF, polyvinylidene fluoride; RIPA, radio immunoprecipitation assay; ROS, reactive oxygen species; SDS-PAGE, sodium dodecyl sulfate polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis; SIRT3, Sirtuin 3

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Hydrogen sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S) is a gaseous transmitter and plays important roles in several diseases [29,30]. H<sub>2</sub>S is a biologically active gas that is synthesized naturally by three enzymes, cystathionine  $\gamma$ -lyase (CSE), cystathionine  $\beta$ -synthetase (CBS) and 3-mercaptopyruvate sulfurtransferase (3-MST) [31]. In addition, H<sub>2</sub>S acts as an endogenous scavenger for reactive oxygen species [32–34]. Furthermore, H<sub>2</sub>S physiologically modifies protein cysteines to form S-sulfhydration, which appears to be a physiologic posttranslational modification for proteins [29,35]. Our previously studies have demonstrated that H<sub>2</sub>S has powerful antioxidative and anti-inflammatory properties in several pathological process, including myocardial fibrosis, endothelial dysfunction, diabetes-accelerated atherosclerosis, myocardial hypertrophy, and testicular dysfunction [36–40].

In this study, exogenous treatment with H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, a ROS-generating agent, was used to mimic oxidative stress in macrophages. We demonstrated that H<sub>2</sub>S attenuated H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>-induced NLRP3 inflammasome activation in macrophages THP-1. H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>-induced NLRP3 inflammasome activation led to caspase-1 activation and IL-1 $\beta$  production. We further demonstrated that NLRP3 bound to ROS-generated mitochondria in macrophages exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>. However, pretreatment with H<sub>2</sub>S reduced these above effects of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> on macrophages. In addition, we found that H<sub>2</sub>S enhanced c-Jun transcriptional activity directly via S-sulfhydration of c-Jun protein at cysteine 269. The increased c-Jun transcriptional activity contributed to the increasing expression of SIRT3 and p62, which exhibited remarkable antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects in macrophages. This study deepens our understanding of the protective effects of H<sub>2</sub>S via c-Jun S-sulfhydration in macrophages.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Cell culture and treatment

THP-1 human monocyte cells obtained from Cell Bank at the Chinese Academy of Sciences were cultured in 25 mM HEPES-buffered RPMI 1640 (Life Technologies, Rockville, MD, USA) containing 10% FBS (Life Technologies, Rockville, MD, USA) and 50  $\mu$ M  $\beta$ -mercaptoethanol (Life Technologies, Rockville, MD, USA). THP-1 cells were differentiated into macrophages by incubation with 5 ng/mL 4 $\beta$ -phorbol-12-myristate-13-acetate (PMA; Biyuntian, Hangzhou, China) for 24 h. RPMI 1640 complete medium was replaced before addition of H<sub>2</sub>S donor, NaHS (100  $\mu$ M; Sigma-Aldrich, St Louis, MO, USA). After 4 h treatment, cells were incubated in freshly prepared medium containing H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (250  $\mu$ M; Sigma-Aldrich, St Louis, MO, USA) for a further 4 h. Mitochondria-targeted antioxidant Mito-TEMPO was purchased from Abcam (ab144644, Cambridge, MA, USA). Cathepsin B inhibitor CA-074Me was purchased from Bachem (4027913, Bubendorf, Switzerland). P2X<sub>7</sub> receptor inhibitor A438079 was purchased from Selleck Chemicals (S7705, Shanghai, China). For cell experiments, these reagents were dissolved in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) and were used at the desired concentration (indicated in figure legends).

### 2.2. Transient transfection and dual-luciferase reporter assay

Human c-Jun (Gene ID: 3725) cDNA was purchased from GENEWIZ, Inc. (Suzhou, China). Human c-Jun cDNA was cloned into pcDNA3.1 by GENEWIZ. Single mutation at cysteine-99 (C99A), cysteine-269 (C269A), or cysteine-320 (C320A) in c-Jun was conducted by GENEWIZ. pAP1-TA-luc vector is a luciferase reporter construct with multiple AP-1 (TGACTAA) response elements and purchased from Biyuntian (Hangzhou, China). The response elements of c-Jun in SIRT3 and p62 genes promoter were predicted via using JASPAR databases (Supplementary data 1). The wild type and deletion of the c-Jun response element in the SIRT3 and p62 promoter were purchased from GENEWIZ, Inc. (Suzhou, China). SIRT3-WT (–500––1), SIRT3 $\Delta$ –337––325, p62-WT (–500––1), and p62 $\Delta$ –389––377 were

subcloned into luciferase reporter vector pGL4 (Promega, Madison, WI, USA) by GENEWIZ. pGL4.74 (Promega, Madison, WI, USA) vector was also purchased from Promega. After incubation with 5 ng/mL PMA for 24 h, THP-1 macrophages were transfected with indicated plasmids by using Lipofectamine 3000 reagent (Invitrogen) according to manufacturer's recommendations and the method as previously described [37]. Cells were cultured for 24 h after transfection. The luciferase activity was measured by the dual luciferase assay system (Promega, Madison, WI, USA) according to the manufacturer's instructions. Data were normalized by the activity of Renilla luciferase. Macrophages were transfected with NLRP3 siRNA (sense 5'-GUUUGACUAUCUGUUCUdTdT-3' [41]; GenePharma, Shanghai, China) using Lipofectamine 3000 (Invitrogen, Carlsbad, CA, USA) according to the manufacturer's instructions.

### 2.3. Western blotting

RIPA lysis buffer (Biyuntian, Hangzhou, China) containing protease inhibitor cocktail (ThermoFisher, Waltham, MA, USA) was used to obtain whole-cell lysates from macrophages. Protein concentrations were quantified using BCA Protein Assay Kit (Pierce, Rockford, IL, USA). Equal amounts of protein were loaded into SDS-PAGE and transferred onto a PVDF membrane (Bio-Rad, Hercules, CA, USA). Membranes were incubated with rabbit antibodies to caspase-1 (#3866, CST, Danvers, MA, USA), IL-1 $\beta$  (#ab45692, Abcam, Cambridge, MA, USA), CBS (#ab135626, Abcam), CSE (#ab151769, Abcam), NLRP3 (#13158, CST), SIRT3 (#2627, CST), and GAPDH (#AP0063, Bioworld, Nanjing, China) as well as mouse antibodies to caspase-1 p20 (#AG-20B-0048, AdipoGen, San Diego, CA, USA), 3-MST (#sc-374,326, Santa Cruz Biotechnology, Santa Cruz, CA, USA), and p62 (#MB9009, Bioworld). All blots were overlaid with appropriate HRP-conjugated secondary antibodies and visualized by enhanced chemiluminescence substrate (Bio-Rad, Hercules, CA, USA).

### 2.4. Immunofluorescent staining and confocal microscopy

THP-1 monocyte cells were seeded on glass slides (NEST, Wuxi, China) and incubated with 5 ng/mL PMA for 24 h. Then, the cells were treated as described above. After the treatment, the cells were washed twice with sterile PBS and fixed with ice-cold methanol, permeabilized with 0.01% Triton X-100 and blocked in 3% BSA. The cells were then incubated overnight with primary antibodies, including anti-NLRP3 (#AG-20B-0014, AdipoGen, San Diego, CA, USA), anti-caspase-1 (#3866, CST), and anti-c-Jun (#9165, CST). For experiments that used mitotracker, cells were stained with 5  $\mu$ M MitoTracker Deep Red FM (#M22426, Life Technologies) for 20 min prior to methanol fixation. Secondary fluorescent antibodies (Alexa-488, or -594; Life Technologies) were added for 1 h and DAPI (#sc-24,941, Santa Cruz) was used for nuclear counterstaining. Samples were imaged through confocal microscope (Zeiss LSM 410, Oberkochen, Germany) and quantified using Image-Pro Plus analysis software.

### 2.5. Measurement of ROS and mtROS formation

Superoxide production in cells was detected by dihydroethidium (DHE; Vigorous, Beijing, China) assay as the manufacturer's instructions. Briefly, macrophages were treated as described above, after which the cells were washed twice with PBS and incubated with 5  $\mu$ M of DHE for 30 min and washed twice with PBS. Fluorescence was measured with a Nikon TE2000 Inverted Microscope and quantified using Image-Pro Plus analysis software. Mitochondrial ROS were measured using MitoSOX (#M36008, Molecular Probes, Carlsbad, CA, USA). Briefly, macrophages were treated as above described, after which the cells were washed twice with PBS and loaded with 5  $\mu$ M of MitoSOX and 100 nM MitoTracker Green FM (#M7514, Molecular Probes) for 20 min. Fluorescence was measured through confocal microscope (Zeiss

LSM 410) and quantified using Image-Pro Plus analysis software.

## 2.6. Modified biotin switch assay of S-sulfhydration

Modified biotin switch assay was performed as described by Ju et al. [42]. Briefly, cells were lysed in HEN buffer (250 mM HEPES (pH 7.7), 0.1 mM neocuproine, and 1 mM EDTA) supplemented with 150  $\mu$ M deferoxamine, 1% NP-40, and protease inhibitor cocktail (ThermoFisher). Samples were sonicated and centrifuged at 16,000 g for 15 min at 4 °C. Protein concentrations of the supernatant samples were quantified using BCA Protein Assay Kit (Pierce). Lysates were diluted to reach 2 mg/mL final protein concentration and were added to blocking buffer (HEN buffer adjust to 2.5% SDS and 20 mM MMTS (methyl methanethiosulfonate)) at 50 °C for 30 min with frequent vortexing. The MMTS was then removed by acetone and the proteins were precipitated at -20 °C for 20 min. Proteins were resuspended in HENS buffer (HEN buffer containing 1% SDS and 4 mM biotin-HPDP (N-[6-(biotinamido)hexyl]-3'-(2'-pyridyldithio) propinamide). After incubation for 2 h at 25 °C, biotinylated proteins were purified by streptavidin-agarose beads (ThermoFisher), which were then washed with HENS buffer. The biotinylated proteins were eluted in 2 $\times$  Laemmli sample buffer and subjected to western blotting analysis with anti-c-Jun antibody. The used chemicals were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich (St Louis, MO, USA).

## 2.7. Real-time PCR

Total RNA was extracted using TRIzol reagent (Takara, Dalian, China). Total RNA was reverse transcribed to cDNA by using the PrimeScript RT Master Mix Kit (Takara, Dalian, China). Real-time PCR was carried out with the resulting cDNAs in triplicate using SYBR Green remix (Takara, Dalian, China) and the ABI 7500 Real-Time PCR System (Applied Biosystems, Foster City, CA, USA). GAPDH was used for normalization. Primers' sequences are obtained from PrimerBank ([pga.mgh.harvard.edu/primerbank](http://pga.mgh.harvard.edu/primerbank)). (PrimerBank ID: SIRT3, 157671925c1; p62, 214830450c1; GAPDH, 378404907c1) in supplementary data 1.

## 2.8. Animals and murine macrophage cells culture

SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> mice were the gift of Professor Hongliang Li (Wuhan University, Wuhan, China) [37]. All animal experiments were approved by the Committee on Animal Care of Nanjing Medical University. Peritoneal macrophages were harvested from the peritoneal cavity with a cold RPMI 1640 medium. After centrifugation at 1200 rpm for 10 min at 4 °C, the cell pellet was washed once and resuspended in a complete medium: 25 mM HEPES-buffered RPMI 1640 (Life Technologies, Rockville, MD, USA) containing 10% FBS (Life Technologies, Rockville, MD, USA), 100 IU/mL penicillin, and 100  $\mu$ g/mL streptomycin [38]. Bone marrow-derived macrophages (BMM) were obtained by treating bone marrow cells with macrophage colony-stimulating factor (M-CSF). Briefly, mice were sacrificed, bone marrow was isolated from the hind legs. The bones were flushed with RPMI 1640 medium using a 5-mL syringe and a 25-gauge needle. Bone marrow cells were isolated and cultured in complete RPMI 1640 media containing recombinant murine M-CSF (10 ng/mL, Peprotech, Rocky Hill, NJ, USA) for 5–7 days [43,44].

## 2.9. Human macrophage culture

Human peripheral blood monocytes were isolated from each subject by density gradient centrifugation and cultured as our described previously [45]. Briefly, human peripheral blood monocytes were differentiated into macrophages using human macrophage colony stimulating factor (M-CSF, 1 ng/mL, Peprotech, Rocky Hill, NJ, USA) for 5 days. The investigation conforms to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. The study protocol was approved by the ethics

committees of Nanjing Medical University. Written informed consent was obtained from all volunteers.

## 2.10. Statistical analysis

All data are presented as means  $\pm$  s.e.m. as indicated. Statistical analysis was performed by a two-tailed unpaired Student's *t*-test or one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance), followed by the post hoc Tukey's test. For all tests, *P*-values lower than 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

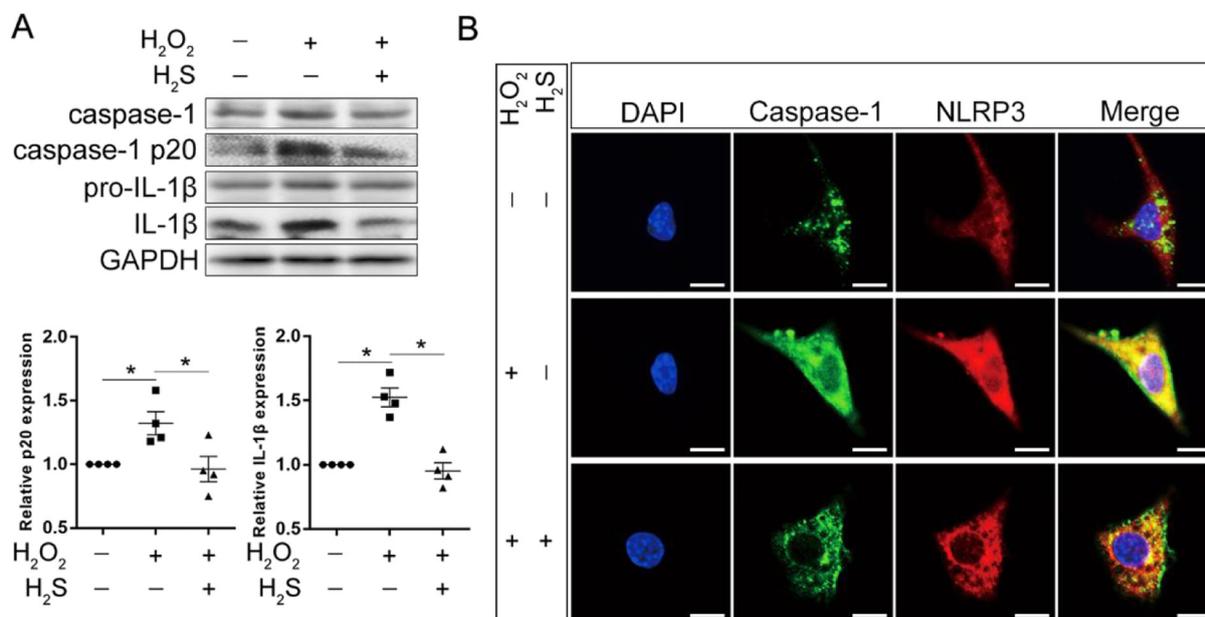
## 3. Results

### 3.1. Effects of H<sub>2</sub>S on NLRP3 inflammasome activation of macrophages exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>

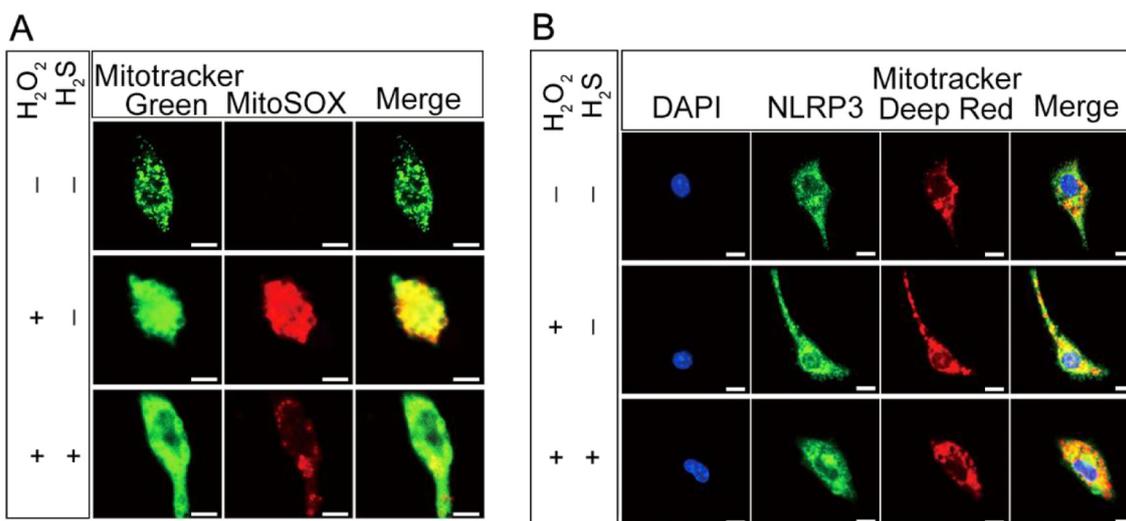
IL-1 $\beta$ , which is synthesized mainly by monocytes and macrophages, is a powerful mediator of inflammatory response to sterile insults. The stimulation of H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> on macrophages cells induced the transcription of proinflammatory mediators [46]. To determine whether H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> induces NLRP3-mediated IL-1 $\beta$  production in macrophages, we ascertained NLRP3-inflammasome activation of macrophages exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>. The IL-1 $\beta$  production and caspase-1 activation were analyzed by western blotting and we found that macrophages (human primary macrophages and THP-1-derived macrophages) responded to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> with a significant increasing of IL-1 $\beta$  production and caspase-1 activation (Fig. 1A and Supplementary Fig. 1A). However, IL-1 $\beta$  production and caspase-1 activation were reduced by pretreatment of macrophages with NaHS (H<sub>2</sub>S donor; Fig. 1A and Supplementary Fig. 1A). Next, we measured the co-localization of caspase-1 and NLRP3 in the presence or absence of H<sub>2</sub>S. Findings showed an increased co-localization of caspase-1 and NLRP3 in macrophages (human primary macrophages and THP-1-derived macrophages) exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, while the effect was again rescued by H<sub>2</sub>S (Fig. 1B and Supplementary Fig. 1B). Moreover, the protein levels of H<sub>2</sub>S-producing enzymes CBS, CSE, and 3-MST were measured and findings showed that the expression of H<sub>2</sub>S-producing enzymes were decreased in H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>-treated macrophages (Supplementary Fig. 1C). The decreased IL-1 $\beta$  production and caspase-1 activation in H<sub>2</sub>S-pretreated macrophages might be dependent on NLRP3 inflammasome activation. To test this hypothesis, the NLRP3 was knocked down in THP-1-derived macrophages by short interfering RNA (siRNA, Supplementary Fig. 1D). Results showed that IL-1 $\beta$  production and caspase-1 activation from the THP-1-derived macrophages with NLRP3 knockdown was substantially diminished in response to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> with or without H<sub>2</sub>S pretreatment (Supplementary Fig. 1E). Recent studies have indicated that oxidative stress-induced mtROS generation leads to NLRP3 inflammasome formation and activation in macrophages [47]. Thus, THP-1-derived macrophages were pretreated with the P2X<sub>7</sub> antagonists A438079, cathepsin B inhibitor CA-074Me, or Mito-TEMPO prior to stimulation with H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>. Surprisingly, when macrophages were pretreated with Mito-TEMPO, but not with A438079 or CA-074Me, we observed decreased IL-1 $\beta$  production and caspase-1 activation in macrophages exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (Supplementary Fig. 2A). Therefore, H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>-induced NLRP3 inflammasome activation was independent of P2X<sub>7</sub> receptor, or the cathepsin B activation, but dependent on the mitochondrial ROS generation in macrophages.

### 3.2. Effects of H<sub>2</sub>S on mitochondrial ROS production of macrophages exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>

To determine whether the protective role of H<sub>2</sub>S against NLRP3 inflammasome activation is related to reduction of mitochondrial ROS (mtROS), mitochondrial redox status was monitored by the mitochondrial superoxide-sensitive dye MitoSOX. The fluoroprobe MitoSOX was introduced for selective detection of superoxide in the mitochondria of live cells and was validated with confocal microscopy by measuring the



**Fig. 1.** Protective effects of H<sub>2</sub>S on H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>-induced NLRP3 inflammasome activation in macrophages. **(A)** and **(B)** Human primary macrophages were pretreated with NaHS (100 μM; H<sub>2</sub>S donor) for 4 h before H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (250 μM) for a further 4 h. **(A)** Representative western blotting and quantification of caspase-1, caspase-1 p20, pro-IL-1β, and IL-1β protein expression. Data are means ± s.e.m., n = 4, \*P < 0.05 (one-way ANOVA, post hoc Tukey). **(B)** Intracellular co-localization of caspase-1 and NLRP3 in the presence and absence of H<sub>2</sub>S was examined by confocal microscopy. Representative data were shown from three independent experiments (n = 3). Scale bars, 10 μm.



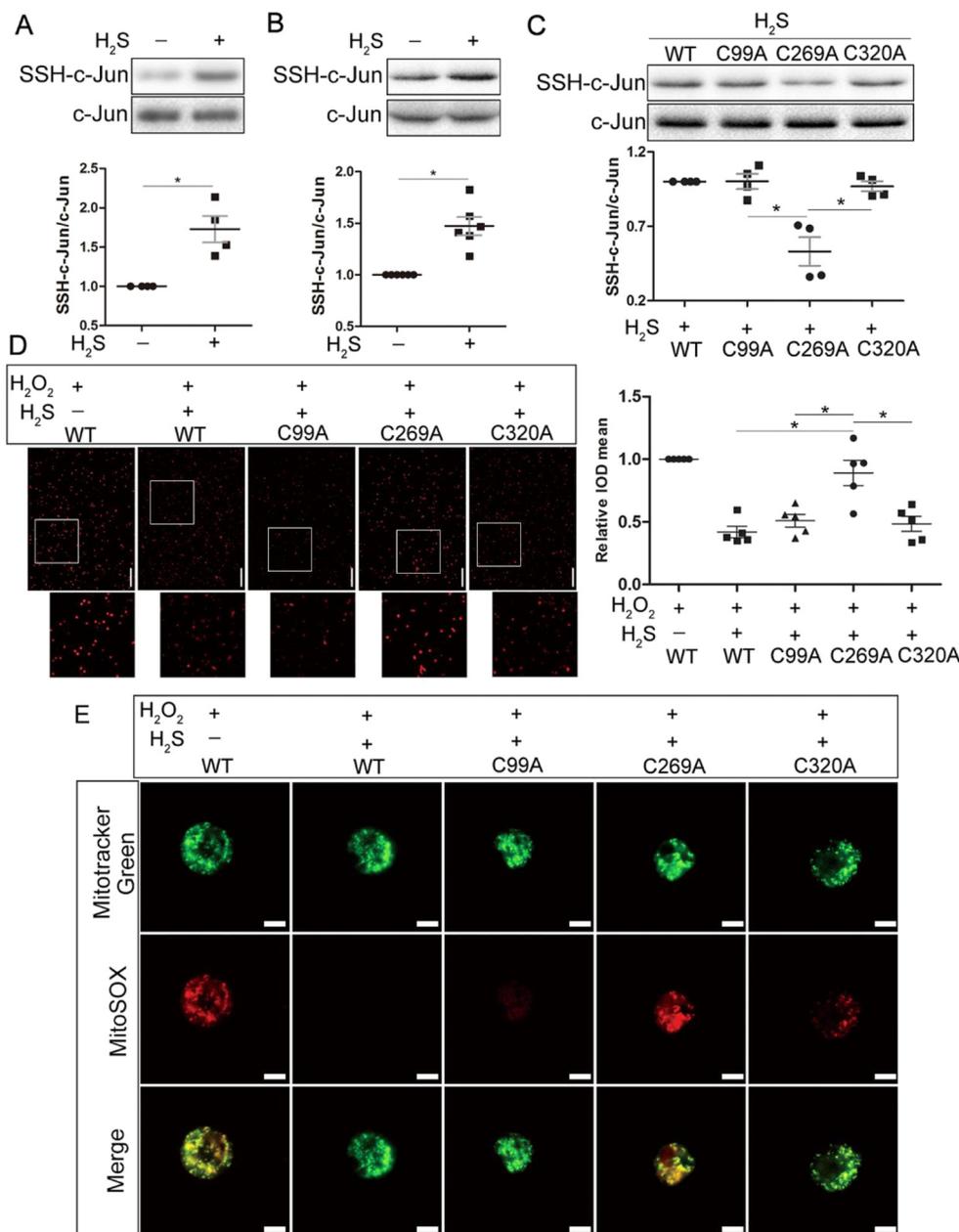
**Fig. 2.** Effects of H<sub>2</sub>S on cellular ROS and mitochondrial ROS production of macrophages exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>. Human primary macrophages were pretreated with NaHS (100 μM; H<sub>2</sub>S donor) for 4 h before H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (250 μM) for a further 4 h. **(A)** Mitochondrial ROS was measured using MitoSOX. Mitochondrial localization of MitoSOX signal was confirmed by co-localization with MitoTracker Green. Representative data were shown from three independent experiments (n = 3). Scale bars, 10 μm. **(B)** Mitochondrial recruitment of NLRP3 was examined by using MitoTracker Deep Red stain and multicolor confocal immunofluorescence microscopy. Representative data were shown from three independent experiments (n = 3). Scale bars, 10 μm.

mtROS. MitoSOX fluorescence colocalized with the mitochondria as detected using the probe MitoTracker Green. As expected, treatment of macrophages (human primary macrophages and THP-1-derived macrophages) with H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> resulted in mtROS generation as demonstrated by an increasing in MitoSOX fluorescence; however, pretreatment with H<sub>2</sub>S attenuated mtROS generation (Fig. 2A and Supplementary Fig. 2A). Moreover, recruitment of NLRP3 to mitochondria was detected with MitoTracker Deep Red stain and multicolor confocal immunofluorescence microscopy. The results exhibited an increased recruitment of NLRP3 by mitochondrial in macrophages (human primary macrophages and THP-1-derived macrophages) exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, while the effect was also rescued by H<sub>2</sub>S (Fig. 2B and Supplementary Fig. 2B).

Furthermore, cellular redox status was monitored by the superoxide-sensitive dye dihydroethidium (DHE). THP-1-derived macrophages responded to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> with a significant rise in cellular ROS formation and this rise was reduced by pretreatment of cells with H<sub>2</sub>S donor (Supplementary Fig. 2C).

### 3.3. H<sub>2</sub>S S-sulphydrated c-Jun at cysteine-269 and reduced mtROS production

Previous studies have manifested that H<sub>2</sub>S increases activator protein 1 (AP-1) binding activity with SIRT3 promoter and SIRT3 suppresses NLRP3 inflammasome activation in association with decreased



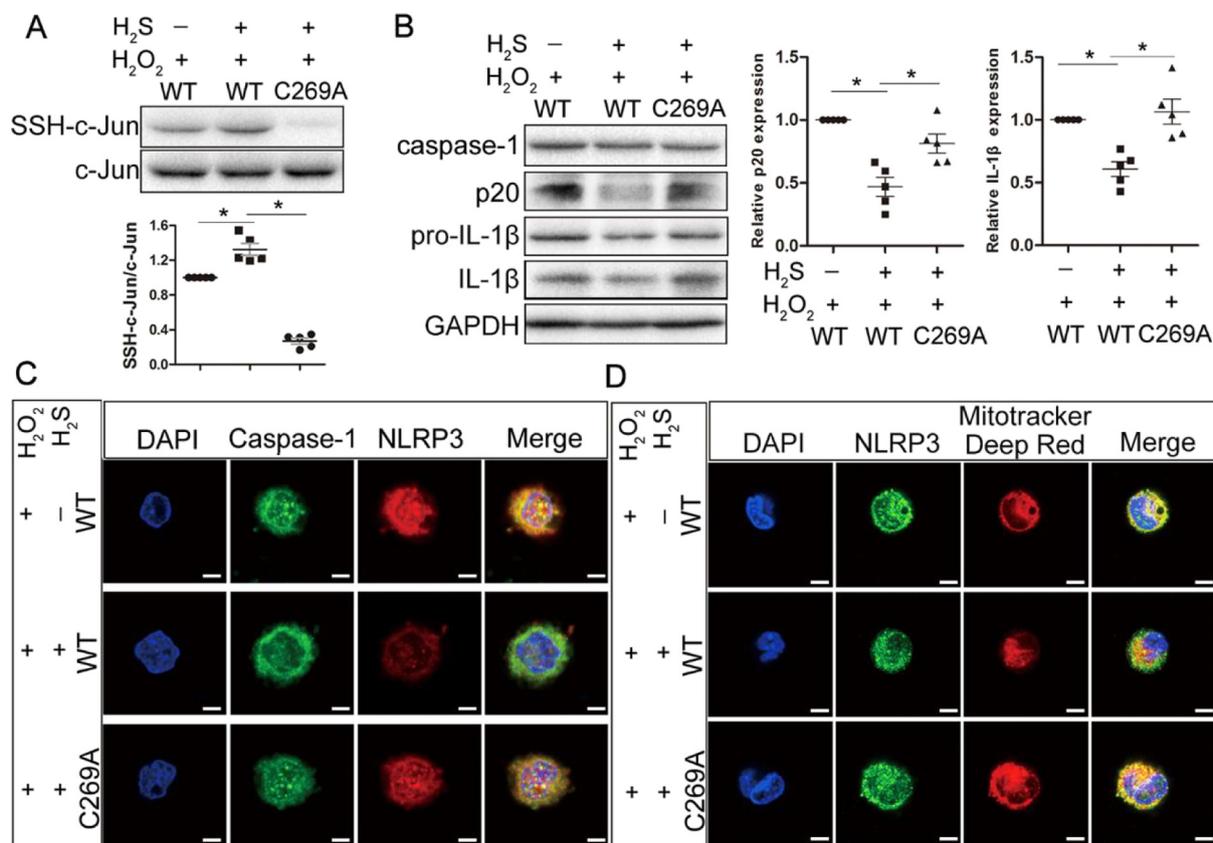
**Fig. 3.** H<sub>2</sub>S S-sulphydrated the c-Jun at cysteine-269 and reduced mtROS production. (A) Human primary macrophages were pretreated with NaHS (100  $\mu$ M; H<sub>2</sub>S donor) for 4 h. After that, the cells were collected for modified biotin switch assay and western blotting for c-Jun. Representative western blotting and quantification of S-sulphydrated c-Jun and c-Jun protein expression. Data are means  $\pm$  s.e.m.,  $n = 4$ ,  $*P < 0.05$  (two-tailed unpaired Student's  $t$ -test). (B) THP-1-derived macrophages were transfected with control or wild-type c-Jun plasmids for 24 h following incubation of NaHS (100  $\mu$ M) for additional 4 h. After that, the cells were collected for modified biotin switch assay and western blotting for c-Jun. Representative western blotting and quantification of S-sulphydrated c-Jun and c-Jun protein expression. Data are means  $\pm$  s.e.m.,  $n = 6$ ,  $*P < 0.05$  (two-tailed unpaired student's  $t$ -test). (C) THP-1-derived macrophages were transfected with control or wild-type c-Jun plasmids or wild-type c-Jun, C99A mutant, C269A mutant, and C320A mutant plasmids for 24 h following incubation of NaHS (100  $\mu$ M) for additional 4 h. Representative western blotting and quantification of S-sulphydrated c-Jun and c-Jun protein expression. Data are means  $\pm$  s.e.m.,  $n = 4$ ,  $*P < 0.05$  (one-way ANOVA, post hoc Tukey). (D) and (E) THP-1-derived macrophages were transfected with wild-type c-Jun, C99A mutant, C269A mutant, and C320A mutant plasmids for 24 h following incubation of NaHS (100  $\mu$ M) for additional 4 h before H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (250  $\mu$ M) for a further 4 h. (D) Cellular ROS production was detected by DHE staining. Scale bars, 100  $\mu$ m. Data are means  $\pm$  s.e.m.,  $n = 5$ ,  $*P < 0.05$  (one-way ANOVA, post hoc Tukey). (E) Mitochondrial ROS was measured using fluorescent probe MitoSOX. Mitochondrial localization of MitoSOX signal was confirmed by co-localization with MitoTracker Green. Representative data were shown from three independent experiments ( $n = 3$ ). Scale bars, 10  $\mu$ m.

mtROS production. We wondered whether H<sub>2</sub>S mediates the decreased mtROS production by S-sulphydrating c-Jun (subunit of AP-1) in macrophages. S-sulphydration is a physiological process wherein H<sub>2</sub>S attaches an additional sulfur to the thiol (-SH) groups of cysteines yielding a hydropersulfide (-SSH). We examined S-sulphydration of c-Jun in macrophages exposed to H<sub>2</sub>S by the modified biotin switch assay. As expected, S-sulphydration of c-Jun in macrophages (human primary macrophages and THP-1-derived macrophages) markedly increased after H<sub>2</sub>S treatment (Fig. 3A and Fig. 3B). To identify the S-sulphydrated cysteine residue of c-Jun, we mutated cysteine-99, cysteine-269, and cysteine-320 (the only three cysteine residues) in the c-Jun protein. All the mutants contained only a single amino acid mutation (cysteine to alanine) at the designated residue (C99A, C269A, C320A). Mutation of cysteine-269, but not cysteine-99 and cysteine-320 abolished the increased level of c-Jun S-sulphydration after H<sub>2</sub>S treatment compared with wild-type c-Jun transfection (Fig. 3C and Supplementary Fig. 3). To determine whether C269 was involved in H<sub>2</sub>S-reduced mtROS production, DHE and MitoSOX Red assays were performed. We found that THP-1-derived macrophages responded to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>

with a significant rise in cellular ROS and mtROS formation, which was rescued by H<sub>2</sub>S treatment (Fig. 3D and E). However, mutation of C269, but not C99 or C320 in the c-Jun protein, reversed the effects of H<sub>2</sub>S on the reducing of cellular ROS and mtROS production, pointing to the critical role of C269 in c-Jun S-sulphydration. (Fig. 3D and E).

#### 3.4. Effects of S-sulphydrated c-Jun on NLRP3 inflammasome activation

Since S-sulphydrated c-Jun reduced mtROS production, we examined the influences of S-sulphydrated c-Jun on NLRP3 inflammasome activation. We transfected the wild-type c-Jun or C269A plasmids to THP-1-derived macrophages exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>. Results showed that S-sulphydration of c-Jun increased by pretreatment with H<sub>2</sub>S in wild-type c-Jun-transfected macrophages, while mutation of C269 in the c-Jun protein reversed the effect of H<sub>2</sub>S on c-Jun S-sulphydration (Fig. 4A). Furthermore, IL-1 $\beta$  production and caspase-1 activation were reduced by pretreatment of wild-type c-Jun-transfected macrophages with H<sub>2</sub>S, while these influences of S-sulphydrated c-Jun were also reversed in C269A-transfected macrophages (Fig. 4B). Additionally, we measured



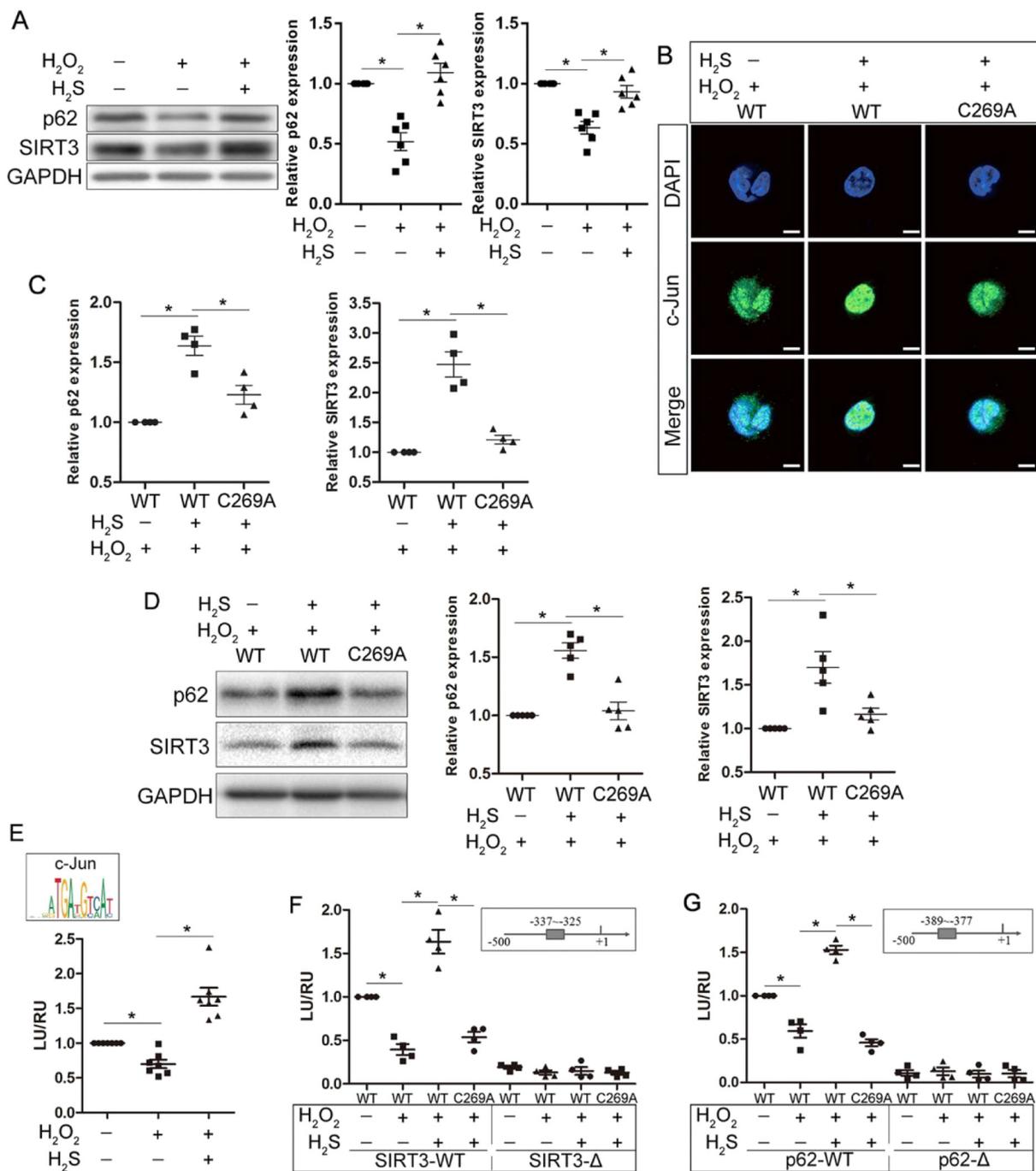
**Fig. 4.** Effects of S-sulfhydrated c-Jun on NLRP3 inflammasome activation. THP-1-derived macrophages were transfected with wild-type c-Jun and C269A mutant plasmids for 24 h. After that macrophages were treated the same as described in Fig. 1. (A) Cells were collected for modified biotin switch assay and western blotting for c-Jun. Representative western blotting and quantification of S-sulfhydrated c-Jun and c-Jun protein expression. Data are means  $\pm$  s.e.m.,  $n = 5$ ,  $*P < 0.05$  (one-way ANOVA, post hoc Tukey). (B) Representative western blotting and quantification of caspase-1, caspase-1 p20, pro-IL-1 $\beta$ , and IL-1 $\beta$  protein expression. Data are means  $\pm$  s.e.m.,  $n = 5$ ,  $*P < 0.05$  (one-way ANOVA, post hoc Tukey). (C) Intracellular co-localization of caspase-1 and NLRP3 in the presence and absence of H<sub>2</sub>S was examined by confocal microscopy. Representative data were shown from three independent experiments ( $n = 3$ ). Scale bars, 10  $\mu$ m. (D) Mitochondrial recruitment of NLRP3 was examined by using MitoTracker Deep Red stain and multicolor confocal immunofluorescence microscopy. Representative data were shown from three independent experiments ( $n = 3$ ). Scale bars, 10  $\mu$ m.

the co-localization of caspase-1 and NLRP3 in the wild-type c-Jun- or C269A-transfected THP-1-derived macrophages. As expected, pretreatment with H<sub>2</sub>S showed an attenuated co-localization of caspase-1 and NLRP3 in wild-type c-Jun-transfected macrophages, while this effect of S-sulfhydrated c-Jun was again reversed in C269A-transfected macrophages (Fig. 4C). Similarly, co-localization of NLRP3 with mitochondria was also decreased in wild-type c-Jun-transfected group and increased in C269A-transfected group (Fig. 4D). Collectively, these results suggested that H<sub>2</sub>S inhibited the NLRP3 inflammasome activation via S-sulfhydration of c-Jun at cysteine-269.

### 3.5. S-sulfhydration of c-Jun enhanced its transcriptional activity on SIRT3 and p62

Previous studies have revealed that SIRT3 and p62 suppress NLRP3 inflammasome activation in association with mtROS production and damaged mitochondria clearance, respectively. Additionally, c-Jun is an important factor in p62 transcription. As expected, treatment of human primary macrophages with H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> decreased the expression of SIRT3 and p62; however, pretreatment with H<sub>2</sub>S restored the SIRT3 and p62 expression (Fig. 5A). To test whether the upregulated expression of SIRT3 and p62 induced by H<sub>2</sub>S is independent on its direct mtROS-scavenging effect, we treated macrophages with the mitochondria-targeted antioxidant Mito-TEMPO prior to exposure to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> and measured the expression of SIRT3 and p62. However, results showed that the pretreatment of Mito-TEMPO failed to increase the levels of SIRT3 and

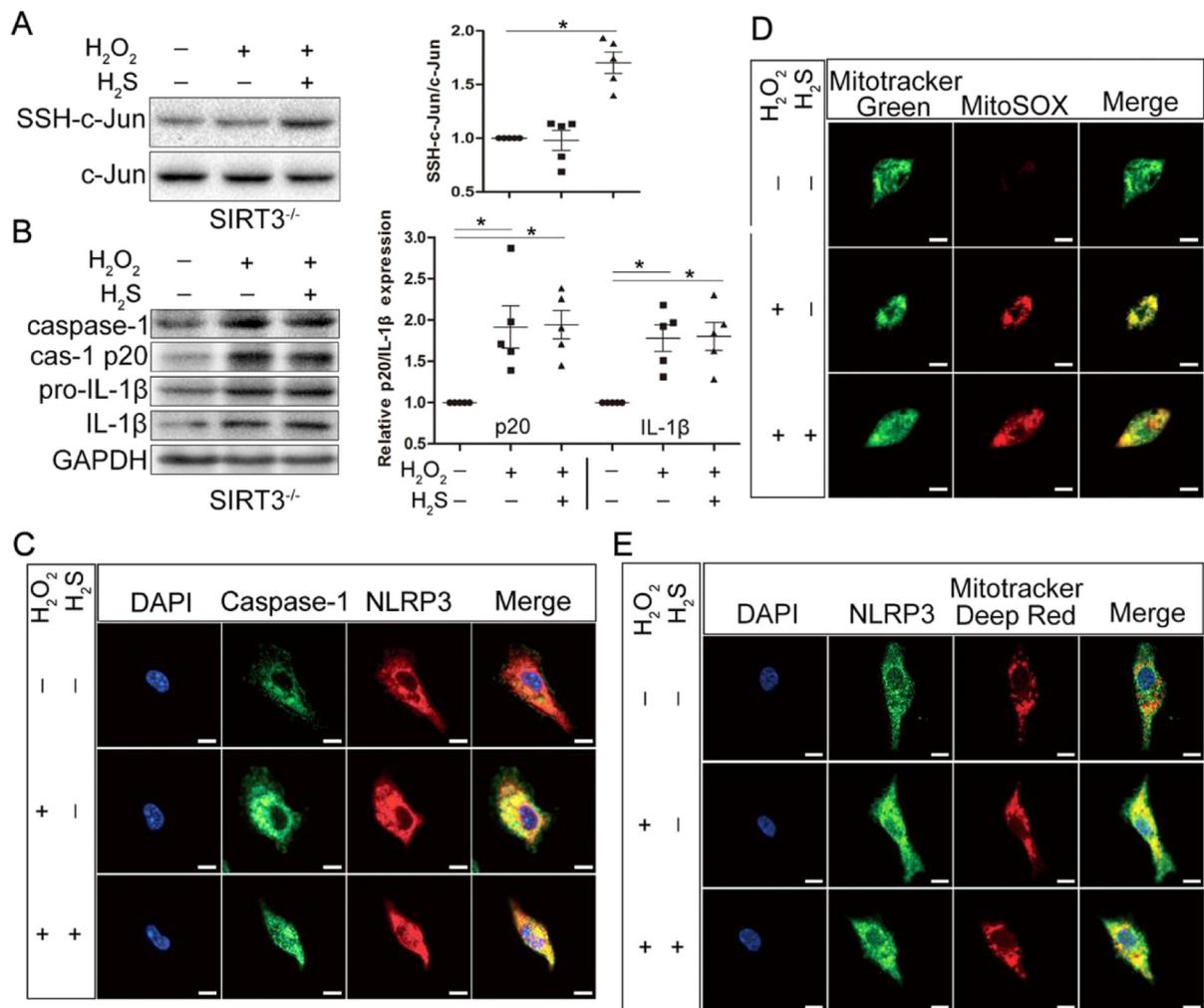
p62 (Supplementary Fig. 4). Furthermore, we transfected the wild-type c-Jun or C269A plasmids to THP-1-derived macrophages exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> and explored the nuclear translocation of c-Jun in the wild-type c-Jun- or C269A-transfected macrophages. The results showed that pretreatment with H<sub>2</sub>S displayed an increased nuclear translocation of c-Jun in wild-type c-Jun-transfected macrophages, while this effect of S-sulfhydrated c-Jun was again reversed in C269A-transfected macrophages (Fig. 5B). To investigate whether S-sulfhydrated c-Jun could increase SIRT3 and p62 expression, we examined the expression of SIRT3 and p62 by using real-time PCR and western blotting assays. Findings showed that the mRNA levels of SIRT3 and p62 increased by pretreatment with H<sub>2</sub>S in wild-type c-Jun-transfected macrophages, while this effect of S-sulfhydrated c-Jun was reversed in C269A-transfected macrophages (Fig. 5C). Consistently, the protein levels of SIRT3 and p62 also increased by pretreatment with H<sub>2</sub>S in wild-type c-Jun-transfected macrophages, while this influence of S-sulfhydrated c-Jun was again reversed in C269A-transfected macrophages (Fig. 5D). To investigate whether the S-sulfhydration of c-Jun could regulate its transcriptional activation, pAP1-TA-luciferase reporter plasmids, a vector construct with multiple c-Jun/AP-1 (TGACTAA) response elements, was transfected into macrophages. The reporter assays revealed a reduced luciferase activity in macrophages exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>; however, the activity was reversed by H<sub>2</sub>S (Fig. 5E). Furthermore, we found that the promoters (-500--1) of human SIRT3 (-337--325) and p62 (-389--377) contain c-Jun response element by using JASPAR databases (<http://jaspar.genereg.net/>) (Supplementary data 1). A



**Fig. 5.** S-sulfhydration of c-Jun enhanced its transcriptional activity on SIRT3 and p62. **(A)** Human primary macrophages were pretreated with NaHS (100  $\mu$ M; H<sub>2</sub>S donor) for 4 h before H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (250  $\mu$ M) for a further 4 h. Representative western blotting and quantification of SIRT3 and p62 protein expression. Data are means  $\pm$  s.e.m.,  $n = 6$ ,  $*P < 0.05$  (one-way ANOVA, post hoc Tukey). **(B-G)** THP-1-derived macrophages were treated the same as described in Fig. 4. **(B)** Intracellular distribution of c-Jun was determined by confocal microscopy. Representative data were shown from three independent experiments ( $n = 3$ ). Scale bars, 10  $\mu$ m. **(C)** The expression SIRT3 and p62 of mRNA was determined by real-time PCR. Data are means  $\pm$  s.e.m.,  $n = 4$ ,  $*P < 0.05$  (one-way 7 ANOVA, post hoc Tukey). **(D)** Representative western blotting and quantification of SIRT3 and p62 protein expression. Data are means  $\pm$  s.e.m.,  $n = 5$ ,  $*P < 0.05$  (one-way ANOVA, post hoc Tukey). **(E)** Macrophages were transfected with pAP1-TA-luc luciferase vector and pGL4.74 plasmids for 12 h following incubation of NaHS (100  $\mu$ M) for additional 4 h before H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (250  $\mu$ M) for a further 4 h. The luciferase activity was determined using a dual-luciferase reporter assay system. Data are means  $\pm$  s.e.m.,  $n = 7$ ,  $*P < 0.05$  (one-way ANOVA, post hoc Tukey). **(F)** Macrophages were transfected with wild-type c-Jun or C269A mutant plasmids. After 24 h cells were transfected with SIRT3-WT or SIRT3- $\Delta$  (p62-WT or p62- $\Delta$ ) (G) luciferase vector and pGL4.74 plasmids for 12 h following incubation of NaHS (100  $\mu$ M) for additional 4 h before H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> (250  $\mu$ M) for a further 4 h. The luciferase activity was determined using a dual-luciferase reporter assay system. Data are means  $\pm$  s.e.m.,  $n = 4$ ,  $*P < 0.05$  (one-way ANOVA, post hoc Tukey).

number of luciferase reporter plasmids containing the wild type and deletion of the c-Jun response elements in the SIRT3 and p62 promoter were constructed. With the deletion constructs, the stimulatory effects of H<sub>2</sub>S on SIRT3 or p62 promoter activity were observed in c-Jun-wild

type and SIRT3-WT or p62-WT transfected THP-1-derived macrophages. However, H<sub>2</sub>S-induced enhancement of SIRT3 or p62 promoter activity was abolished in c-Jun-C269A and SIRT3- $\Delta$  or p62- $\Delta$  transfected macrophages (Fig. 5F and G). These suggest that the c-Jun



**Fig. 6.** The protective effects of H<sub>2</sub>S on SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> mice macrophage. Peritoneal macrophages and bone marrow-derived macrophages (BMM) were treated the same as described in Fig. 1. (A) SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> bone marrow-derived macrophages were collected for modified biotin switch assay and western blotting for c-Jun. Representative western blotting and quantification of S-sulfhydrated c-Jun and c-Jun protein expression. Data are means ± s.e.m., n = 5, \*P < 0.05 (one-way ANOVA, post hoc Tukey). (B) Representative western blotting and quantification of caspase-1, caspase-1 p20, pro-IL-1β, and IL-1β protein expression in SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> BMM. Data are means ± s.e.m., n = 5, \*P < 0.05 (one-way ANOVA, post hoc Tukey). (C) Intracellular co-localization of caspase-1 and NLRP3 in the presence and absence of H<sub>2</sub>S was examined by confocal microscopy in SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> peritoneal macrophages. Representative data were shown from three independent experiments (n = 3). Scale bars, 10 μm. (D) Mitochondrial localization of MitoSOX signal was confirmed by co-localization with MitoTracker Green in SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> peritoneal macrophages. Representative data were shown from three independent experiments (n = 3). Scale bars, 10 μm. (E) Mitochondrial recruitment of NLRP3 9 was examined by using MitoTracker Deep Red stain and multicolor confocal immunofluorescence microscopy in SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> peritoneal macrophages. Representative data were shown from three independent experiments (n = 3). Scale bars, 10 μm.

response elements on the upstream of the SIRT3 and p62 promoters are responsible for the effects of H<sub>2</sub>S on SIRT3 and p62 transcription by S-sulfhydrating c-Jun. Collectively, these results suggest that H<sub>2</sub>S upregulates the SIRT3 and p62 genes expression via S-sulfhydrating c-Jun and increasing its binding activity with the SIRT3 and p62 promoters.

### 3.6. The protective effects of H<sub>2</sub>S on macrophage from SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> mice

Our results suggest that H<sub>2</sub>S-regulated SIRT3 plays an important role in the regulation of oxidative stress and inflammation response through S-sulfhydrating c-Jun in macrophages exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> in vitro. To further confirm the pathophysiological significance of H<sub>2</sub>S-induced SIRT3 expression, we examined the protective effects of H<sub>2</sub>S on mtROS generation and NLRP3 inflammasome activation in SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> mice macrophages. Peritoneal macrophages and bone marrow-derived macrophages (BMM) were pretreated with H<sub>2</sub>S before H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> treatment. Firstly, we confirmed that S-sulfhydration of c-Jun still increased by pretreatment with H<sub>2</sub>S in SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> BMM (Fig. 6A). Secondly,

however, the activation of caspase-1 and production of IL-1β did not reduce in SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> BMM exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>S pretreatment (Fig. 6B). Thirdly, the increasing of co-localization of caspase-1 and NLRP3 in SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> peritoneal macrophages exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> also did not rescue with H<sub>2</sub>S pretreatment (Fig. 6C). Fourthly, treatment of SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> peritoneal macrophages with H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> resulted in mtROS generation and pretreatment with H<sub>2</sub>S also did not attenuate this effect (Fig. 6D). Fifthly, the recruitment of NLRP3 to mitochondrial also displayed no difference in SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> peritoneal macrophages exposed to H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> in the presence and absence of H<sub>2</sub>S (Fig. 6E). These results demonstrated that SIRT3 was required for H<sub>2</sub>S to inhibit excessive oxidative stress and NLRP3 inflammasome activation in macrophages.

## 4. Discussion

Cardiovascular risk factors such as hypercholesterolemia, hypertension, and diabetes mellitus enhance ROS generation, resulting in oxidative stress [48]. Macrophage, the dominant cell type recruited to

inflammatory sites, is known to secrete ROS and may be primarily responsible for oxidative damage. Numerous stimuli such as oxidized low-density lipoprotein (OxLDL), high glucose, hydrogen peroxide ( $H_2O_2$ ), tumor necrosis factor (TNF), and hypoxia can cause oxidative stress and promote macrophage inflammation, which is associated with the pathophysiology of cardiovascular diseases [49–54]. The reactive oxygen species that are generated by mitochondrial respiration, especially  $H_2O_2$ , are potent inducers of oxidative damage [55]. Here, we treated macrophages with exogenous  $H_2O_2$  for mimicking different stimuli-induced oxidative stress in macrophages. Remarkably,  $H_2O_2$ -treated macrophages showed an increase in oxidative stress and inflammation [46,52,56,57]. In the present study, we demonstrated that  $H_2O_2$  could induce the activation of NLRP3 inflammasome, leading to the activation of caspase-1 and production of pro-inflammatory cytokines IL-1 $\beta$  in macrophages. Moreover, as evident from the NLRP3 siRNA studies, we demonstrated that  $H_2O_2$ -induced IL-1 $\beta$  production and caspase-1 activation was dependent on NLRP3 inflammasome activation. We also found that the expression of  $H_2S$ -producing enzymes was decreased in  $H_2O_2$ -treated macrophages, indicating the generation of endogenous  $H_2S$  was decreased. In consideration of the powerful antioxidative and anti-inflammatory properties of  $H_2S$ , we next put our focus on whether  $H_2S$  could play a protective role in reducing oxidative stress and inflammation in macrophages exposed to  $H_2O_2$ . Similarly, our data showed that exogenous  $H_2S$  treatment protected macrophages from NLRP3 inflammasome activation against  $H_2O_2$  insult. Recent studies suggest that  $H_2S$  reduces NLRP3 inflammasome activation in free fatty acids and monosodium urate (MSU) crystals-stimulated macrophages, or microglia after intracerebral haemorrhage [58–60]. What we observed in macrophages stimulated with  $H_2O_2$  is that oxidative stress-induced NLRP3 inflammasome activation is dependent on the mitochondrial ROS generation, but not P2X<sub>7</sub> receptor or cathepsin B activation. These results are consistent with the study of Castelblanco et al., which showed that  $H_2S$  donors inhibited MSU crystal-induced mtROS generation [60]. It remains to be further elucidated whether the protective role of  $H_2S$  against NLRP3 inflammasome activation is related to mtROS reduction, as the conception that mtROS induces NLRP3-dependent inflammasome activation has been established [61,62]. For example, mitochondrial oxidative stress in lesional macrophages amplifies atherosclerotic lesion development by promoting NF- $\kappa$ B-mediated entry of monocytes and other inflammatory processes [63]. Additionally, NLRP3 inflammasome activation by mitochondrial oxidative stress in macrophages contributes to the development of angiotensin II-induced aortic aneurysm [64]. Interestingly, we observed that generation of mtROS and recruitment of NLRP3 to mitochondrial was increased in macrophages exposed to  $H_2O_2$ , while these effects of  $H_2O_2$  was rescued by  $H_2S$  treatment. Therefore, for the first time, we demonstrated that  $H_2S$  protected macrophages from  $H_2O_2$ -induced NLRP3 inflammasome activation via reducing the generation of mtROS.

Our next focus is to explore how  $H_2S$  reduced the generation of mtROS.  $H_2S$  can cause protein S-sulfhydration (or persulfidation) to affect their functions [29,65]. Previous studies have demonstrated that S-sulfhydration of GAPDH affects PSD95 degradation and memory [66]. And S-sulfhydration of NF- $\kappa$ B inhibits apoptosis [67]. S-sulfhydration of  $K_{ATP}$  could contribute to  $H_2S$ -induced vasodilation [68].  $H_2S$  is also involved in endoplasmic reticulum stress via triggering S-sulfhydration of PTP1B [69]. In recent years, more and more proteins have been found to be regulated by S-sulfhydration [65]. Our groups have previously characterized that  $H_2S$  increases AP-1 binding activity with SIRT3 promoter, thus enhancing SIRT3 transcription to attenuate endothelial oxidative stress [37]. Accordingly, we wondered whether  $H_2S$  could S-sulfhydrated c-Jun (subunit of AP-1) in macrophages. Interestingly, we found that c-Jun is basically S-sulfhydrated and exogenously applied  $H_2S$  further enhanced c-Jun S-sulfhydration. To discover S-sulfhydrated cysteine residues of c-Jun, we mutated cysteine-99, cysteine-269, and cysteine-320 (the only three cysteine residues) in c-Jun protein. We confirmed that cysteine-269 was responsible for c-Jun S-

sulfhydration. However, mutation of cysteine-269, but not cysteine-99 and cysteine-320, largely prevented the protective influences of  $H_2S$  on the reducing of ROS and mtROS production exposed to  $H_2S$ , pointing to the critical role of C269 in c-Jun S-sulfhydration. After that, we explored the effects of S-sulfhydrated c-Jun on NLRP3 inflammasome activation. As expected, the results showed that S-sulfhydration of c-Jun cysteine-269 was involved in suppressing NLRP3 inflammasome activation by  $H_2S$  in macrophages exposed to  $H_2O_2$ . Therefore, we demonstrated that the  $H_2S$  inhibited the NLRP3 inflammasome activation via S-sulfhydration c-Jun at cysteine-269. Taken together, the findings that mutation of the c-Jun S-sulfhydrated cysteines diminished the suppressive influences of  $H_2S$  on NLRP3 inflammasome activation are consistent with the suggestion that there is a relevant link between the S-sulfhydration of c-Jun and its antioxidative properties by  $H_2S$ .

SIRT3 can enhance antioxidant enzyme activity to exert its ROS-scavenging capacity [37,70]. Recent studies have shown that SIRT3 decreases NLRP3 inflammasome activation in association with diminished mtROS production via activating SOD2 [71,72]. Several groups, including our own, have previously indicated that c-Jun/AP-1 is able to bind with SIRT3 promoter and enhances its expression [37,73,74]. p62 binds polyubiquitinated proteins and damaged organelles and targets them to autophagosomal clearance via its ubiquitin association domain and LC3 binding motif, respectively [75,76]. Additionally, p62 also has antioxidant capacity [77–80]. p62 is recruited to damaged mitochondria and eliminates them, thus contributing to the prevention of excessive inflammasome activation [76]. Moreover, c-Jun/AP-1 is an important factor in p62 transcription [81–83]. The question we posed here is whether S-sulfhydrated c-Jun could increase SIRT3 and p62 expression. The findings in this study showed that, via a c-Jun C269-dependent manner, the S-sulfhydrated c-Jun resulted in increasing SIRT3 and p62 expression and protected macrophages against  $H_2O_2$  insult. To further confirm that the upregulated expression of SIRT3 and p62 induced by  $H_2S$  is independent on its direct mtROS-scavenging effect, we treated macrophages with the mitochondria-targeted antioxidant Mito-TEMPO prior to exposure to  $H_2O_2$  and found that the pretreatment of Mito-TEMPO failed to increase the levels of SIRT3 and p62. These results suggested the antioxidant effects of  $H_2S$  were mainly dependent on S-sulfhydrated c-Jun in  $H_2O_2$ -treated macrophages. However, both mRNA and protein expression of SIRT3 was significantly enhanced by  $H_2S$  in  $H_2O_2$ -exposed macrophages. This phenomenon drove us to focus on SIRT3. Moreover, we found that the influences of  $H_2S$  on mtROS generation and NLRP3 inflammasome activation was diminished in the macrophages of SIRT3<sup>-/-</sup> mice, suggesting that the protective effects of  $H_2S$  against oxidative stress and NLRP3 inflammasome activation partly dependent on SIRT3.

Taken together, the results showed that  $H_2S$  is pivotal in the regulation of oxidative stress and inflammation response through S-sulfhydrating c-Jun in macrophages exposed to  $H_2O_2$  (Fig. 7).  $H_2S$  donors have therapeutic potential for diseases such as cancer, peptic ulcer

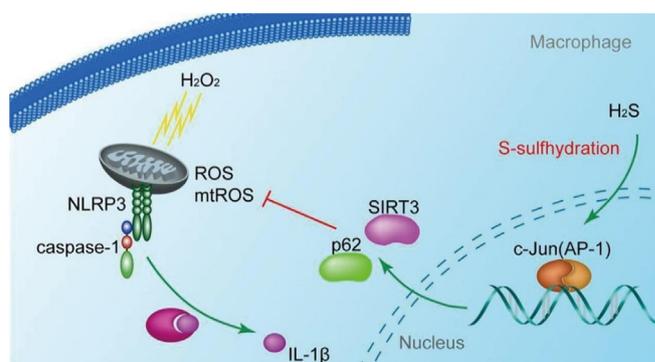


Fig. 7. The proposed signaling pathway underlying  $H_2S$  regulation of c-Jun by S-sulfhydration in macrophages.

disease, acute and chronic inflammatory diseases, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease and erectile dysfunction, arterial and pulmonary hypertension, atherosclerosis, heart failure [84,85]. H<sub>2</sub>S is also regulated by many currently used drugs, such as statins, aspirin, and metformin, but the mechanism of these effects and their clinical implications are only started to be understood [85]. Our findings provide a specific molecular mechanism for therapeutic potential of H<sub>2</sub>S donors in cardiovascular disease. Modifications of c-Jun may offer promise in the therapy of cardiovascular disease. Therefore, H<sub>2</sub>S donors selectively targeted to c-Jun may provide notable benefit.

### Conflict of interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

### Transparency document

The Transparency document associated with this article can be found, in online version.

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### Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbadis.2018.05.023>.

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