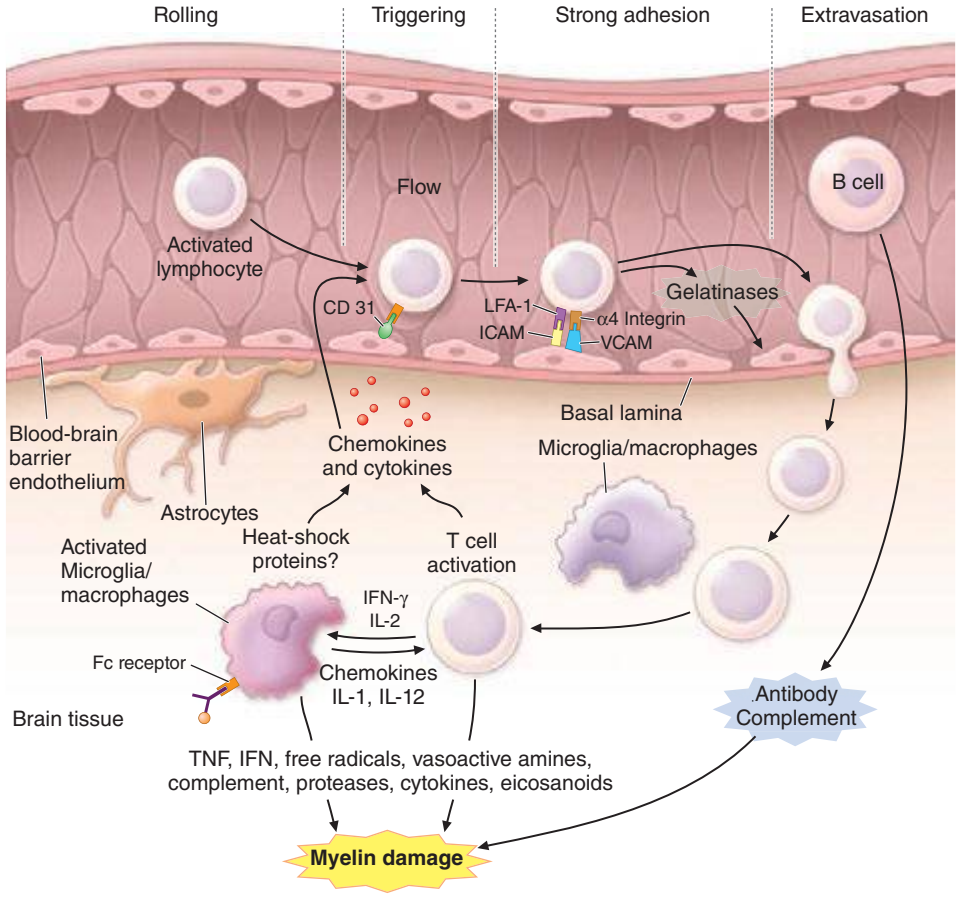

FIGURE 444e-3 A model for experimental allergic encephalomyelitis (EAE). Crucial steps for disease initiation and progression include peripheral activation of preexisting autoreactive T cells; homing to the central nervous system (CNS) and extravasation across the blood-brain barrier; reactivation of T cells by exposed autoantigens; secretion of cytokines; activation of microglia and astrocytes and recruitment of a secondary inflammatory wave; and immune-mediated myelin destruction. ICAM, intercellular adhesion molecule; IFN, interferon; IL, interleukin; LFA-1, leukocyte function-associated antigen-1; TNF, tumor necrosis factor; VCAM, vascular cell adhesion molecule.

MICROBIOTA AND NEUROLOGIC DISEASE

The human microbiome (Chap. 86e) represents the collective set of genes from the 10^{14} organisms living in our gut, skin, mucosa, and other sites. Different microbial communities are associated with different ethnicities, diets, and environments. In any individual, the predominant gut microbiota can be remarkably stable over decades, but also can be altered by exposure to certain microbial species, for example by ingestion of probiotics.

There is compelling evidence that gut microbes can shape immune responses through the interaction of their metabolism with that of humans. These gut-brain interactions are likely to be important in understanding the pathogenesis of many autoimmune neurologic diseases. For example, mice treated with broad-spectrum antibiotics are resistant to EAE, an effect associated with decreases in production of proinflammatory cytokines, and conversely more production of the immunosuppressive cytokines interleukin (IL) 10 and IL-13 and an increase in regulatory T and B lymphocytes. Oral administration of polysaccharide A (PSA) from *Bacillus fragilis* also protects mice from EAE, via increases in IL-10.

In addition to nonspecific effects on immune homeostasis mediated by cytokines and regulatory cells, some microbial proteins can trigger, in susceptible individuals, a cross-reactive immune response against a homologous protein in the nervous system, a mechanism termed *molecular mimicry*. Examples include cross-reactivity between the astrocyte water channel aquaporin-4 and an ABC transporter permease from *Clostridia perfringens* in neuromyelitis optica (Chap. 458); the neural ganglioside Gm1 and similar sialic acid–containing structures from *Campylobacter jejuni* in Guillain-Barré syndrome (Chap. 460); and the sleep-promoting protein hypocretin and hemagglutinin from H1N1 influenza virus in narcolepsy (Chap. 38), among others.

Recently, a number of tantalizing observations have incriminated the microbial environment in the pathogenesis of a much wider spectrum of neurologic conditions and behaviors, extending well beyond the traditional boundaries of immune-mediated pathologies. This is perhaps not surprising, as it has long been known in neurology that gut bacteria can influence brain function, based mostly on classic studies demonstrating that products of gut microbes can worsen hepatic encephalopathy, forming the basis of treatment with antibiotics for this condition.

Mice that developed in a completely germ-free environment displayed less anxiety, lower responses to stressful situations, more exploratory locomotive behaviors, and impaired memory formation compared with non-germ-free counterparts. These behaviors were related to changes in gene expression in pathways related to neural signaling, synaptic function, and modulation of neurotransmitters. Moreover, this behavior could be reversed when the germ-free mice were co-housed with non-germ-free mice.

The enteric autonomic nervous system in humans provides a bidirectional neural connection between the brain and gut. The vagus nerve, which innervates the upper gut and proximal colon, has been implicated in anxiety- and depression-like behaviors in mice. Ingestion of *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* induced changes in expression of the inhibitory neurotransmitter GABA1b in neurons of the limbic cortex, hippocampus, and amygdala, associated with reduced levels of corticosteroids and reduced anxiety- and depression-like behaviors. Remarkably, these changes could be blocked by vagotomy.

Another area of emerging interest is in a possible contribution of the gut microbiome to autism and related disorders. Children with autistic spectrum disorders have long been known to have gastrointestinal disturbances, and it has been claimed that the severity of dysbiosis correlates