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Contents, Volume 5, 1991

Number 1

Immunological Effects of Tumor Vaccines: III. Influenza Virus Oncolysates Inhibit the TPA Induced Activation of Peripheral Blood Mononuclear Cells. C.G. IOANNIDES, R.S. FREEDMAN, R. PATENIA, J.M. BOWEN, N. WARD and C.A. O' BRIAN (<i>Houston, TX, USA</i>)	1
Dihydrofolate Reductase Gene Expression Characterized by the PCR Assay in Human Leukemia Cells. H. MIYACHI, H. HAN and K.I. SCANLON (<i>Duarte, CA, USA</i>)	7
An <i>in Vivo</i> Animal Model to Study Chronic Adriamycin Cardiotoxicity: A P-31 Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy Investigation. R.T. THOMPSON, G.D. MARSH, T. BUTLAND, C. SPRAGUE, S.E. SANFORD, H. PEEMOELLER, A. A. DRIEDGER and W.R. INCH (<i>London, Ontario, Canada</i>)	13
Cytogenetic Characterization of Eight Human Lymphoblastoid Cell lines. N. J. GUPTA, V.L. HOPWOOD, C.G. SAHASPABUDDHE, K. FURUKAWA and S. PATHAK (<i>Houston, TX, USA</i>)	17
Increased Response to Cisplatin after Long-Term Serial Passage of a Squamous Cell Carcinoma Xenograft. R. RYDELL, S. LYBAK, J. WENNERBERG, R. WILLEÉN (<i>Lund, Sweden</i>)	23
Influence of Treatment with the Immunomodulatory Effective Doses of the β -Galactoside-Specific Lectin from Mistletoe on Tumor Colonization in BALB/c-Mice for Two Experimental Model Systems. J. BEUTH, H.L. KO, H.-J. GABIUS and G. PULVERER (<i>Köln; Göttingen, FRG</i>)	29
A Comparison of the Effects of Repeated Administration of Cyclophosphamide. Cytosine Arabinoside or their Combination on Smooth and Skeletal Muscle. T.Y.LOT, K.E. ONWUKEME (<i>Jos, Nigeria</i>)	33
Effect of a 9 MT Pulsed Magnetic Field on C3H/Bi Female Mice with Mammary Carcinoma. A Comparison between the 1Z HZ and the 460 HZ Frequencies. A. BELLOSSI, A. DESPLACES (<i>Rennes Cédex; Saint Cloud, France</i>)	39
The Use of the Nb Rat in Combination Chemotherapeutic Experiments for Prostate Cancer. J.R. DRAGO and J. SMITH (<i>Columbus, OH, USA</i>)	41
Effect of Intravenous Feeding on Wound Healing in Starvation. An Experimental Study on the Rabbit. K.A. HAUKIPURO, E.J. HARJU, L. RISTELI (<i>Oulu, Finland</i>)	43
Mechanism of the Cytostasis Mediated by Blood Unstimulated Neutrophils on Syngeneic Rat Colon Cancer Cells. D. REISSER and C. FADY (<i>Dijon cedex, France</i>)	49
The Effect of Famotidine on the Neuromuscular Transmission. R. BOSSA, M. CHIERICOZZI, G. EFSTATHIU, I. GALATULAS and M. A. NINCI (<i>Milan, Italy</i>)	53
The Effect of H ₂ Receptor Antagonists on the Neuromuscular Transmission. R. BOSSA, M. CHIERICOZZI, G. EFSTATHIU, I. GALATULAS and M. A. NINCI (<i>Milan, Italy</i>)	57
Cardiotoxicity of Anthracyclines. R. BOSSA, G. EFSTATHIU, J. GALATULAS and M. A. NINCI (<i>Milan, Italy</i>)	61
Zinc, Carotene and Retinol in Melanoma and Non-Melanoma Skin Cancer. T.O. SIU, T. BASU, L.M. JERRY (<i>Hong Kong; Alberta, Canada</i>)	65
Evaluation of Genotoxicity of Clafazimine, an Antileprosy Drug, in Mice <i>in Vivo</i> . III. Sister Chromatid Exchange Analysis in Bone Marrow Cells. B.C. DASH, B. ROY, R.K. DAS (<i>Orissa, India</i>)	69

Immunosuppression by an Immunogenic Immunomodulating Mycobacterial Fraction is Correlated to Changes in Phenotype Distribution of Murine Lymphoid Cells. G. RASHID, D. HALPERIN, I. ZAN-BAR, S. BEN-EFRAIM (<i>Tel-Aviv, Israel</i>)	71
--	----

Number 2

Tumor Cell Lysis and Tumor Growth Inhibition by the Isotype Variants of MAb BR55-2 Directed Against Y Oligosaccharide. Z. STEPLEWSKI, M.D. LUBECK, D. SCHOLZ, H. LOIBNER, J. McDOLAND SMITH, H. KOPROWSKI (<i>Philadelphia, PA, USA; Vienna, Austria</i>)	79
Carcinogenesis in Rats by Substituted Dialkylnitrosamines Given by Gavage. W. LIJINSKY, J.E. SAAVEDRA, R.M. KOVATCH (<i>Frederick, MD, USA</i>)	85
Red Blood Cell Polyamine Evolution during Normal Growth in Mouse. V. QUEMENER, C. MARTIN, R. HAVOUIIS and J.PH. MOULINOX (<i>Rennes Cedex, France</i>)	91
Carcinogenic Fungal Hydrazines. B. TOTH (<i>Omaha, NE, USA</i>)	95
Macrophage Stimulation Activity of Antimicrobial N, N-Dimethylaminoethyl Paramylon. H. SAKAGAMI, K. KIKUCHI, M. TAKEDA, T. SATO, S. ICHIKAWA, M. FUJIMAKI, C. WADA and N. KOMATSU (<i>Tokyo; Ibaraki, Japan</i>)	101
Induction of Uterine Adenomyosis by Pituitary Grafting and Retardation of its Development by Bromocriptine-Mesilate (CB-154) in BALB/c Mice. T. MORI, S. KAWASHIMA and H. NAGASAWA (<i>Tokyo; Kawasaki, Japan</i>)	107
Cause of Pregnancy-Dependent Mammary Tumour-Induced Suppression of Lactation in GR/A Mice. H. NAGASAWA, M. SUZUKI, Y. YAMAMURO, N. SENSUI, T. INABA and J.-I. MORI (<i>Kawasaki; Fujisawa; Sakai; Kanagawa, Japan</i>)	111
Protection by Tree-Peony (<i>Paeonia Suffruticosa Andr</i>) of Obesity in (SLN × C3H/He) F1 Obese Mice. H. NAGASAWA, T. IWABUCHI and H. INATOMI (<i>Kanagawa, Japan</i>)	115
Preliminary Experience with Intraperitoneal Catheters in the Treatment of Ovarian Cancer. C.-G. MÄHLCK, K.O. ROGO and U. STENDAHL (<i>Umeå, Sweden</i>)	119
Distribution of m-IBG in Nude Mice Bearing LAN-5 Neuroblastoma Xenografts and <i>in Vitro</i> Cell Culture. H. VAN DER WALL, M. DURBIDGE, L. WHITE, D. TAYLOR and I.P.C. MURRAY (<i>Randwick; Sydney, Australia</i>)	123
The Regularity of Intersteroidal Relation in Urine as Related to the Law of Mass Action. M. KODAMA, T. KODAMA, R. TOTANI and Y. ASO (<i>Nagoya; Tokyo, Japan</i>)	127
Cell Cycle Time, Growth Fraction and Cell Loss in Xenografted Head and Neck Cancer. U.K. ZÄTTERSTRÖM, A. KÄLLÉN and J. WENNERBERG (<i>Lund, Sweden</i>)	137
Hypoglycemic Activity of <i>Eugenia Jambolana</i> and <i>Ficus Bengalensis</i> : II. Mechanism of Action. S. ACHREKAR, G.S. KAKLIJ and S.M. KELKAR (<i>Bombay, India</i>)	143
The <i>in Vivo</i> Effects of Recombinant Human Erythropoietin on Cisdiamminodichloroplatinum - Induced Anemia in Golden Syrian Hamsters. V. GEBBIA, S. PALMERI, R. VALENZA, L. RAUSA and P. CITARRELLA (<i>Palermo, Italy</i>)	149
An Evaluation of Two Animal Models for Dietary Influences on Reproductive Toxicology. M.H. BRINKWORTH and D. ANDERSON (<i>Carshalton, Surrey, UK</i>)	153
Effect of Conjugation on the Biodistribution of ¹¹¹ In-Labelled Anti-PAP and Anti-PSA Monoclonal Antibodies Examined in Nude Mice with PC-82 Human Tumor Xenografts. M. PERÄLÄ, P. VIHKO, I. PELKONEN, A. LAINE and R. VIHKO (<i>Oulu; Turku, Finland</i>)	159
Possible Patterns of Nuclear Rotation in Binucleate Hepatocytes <i>in Vivo</i> : Static Examination with Fluorescence and Electron Microscopy. S. BARNI and E. SCHERINI (<i>Pavia, Italy</i>)	167
Effect of Reserpine and Calcium Antagonists on Doxorubicin Storage in Various Organs of Young and Senescent Rats. A. PELLEGRINI, P. SOLDANI, M.C. BRESCHI and A. PAPARELLI (<i>Pisa, Italy</i>)	171

Effect of Extra-Genital <i>Schistosoma mansoni</i> and <i>Echinostoma caproni</i> Infections on Serum Levels of Pregnancy - Associated Murine Protein-1 during Murine Pregnancy. E. BINDSEIL, L.L. IVALO ANDERSEN, N. LINDAHL KROG, J. HAU (<i>Frederiksberg, Denmark</i>)	175
A Model for <i>in Vivo</i> Serial Investigation of Hepatic Metabolism Using ³¹ P Nuclear Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy. R.T. THOMPSON, A.L. SCHNEEBERGER, G.D. MARSH, A.A. DRIEDGER, R.I. INCULET (<i>London, Ontario, Canada</i>)	179
Progression of Human Endometrial Adenocarcinoma Heterotransplanted into Nude Mice from Hormone-Sensitive to Hormone Resistant Growth. G. HORVATH, M. FERNÖ, B. BALDETORP, R. CAMERON and J. RANSTAM (<i>Lund, Sweden</i>)	185

Number 3

Special Issue on Immunopathology

Edited by G.R.F. Krueger

Introduction: International Institute of Immunopathology (IIIP), Inc. G. R. F. KRUEGER, A. RAMON and L. M. BUJA (<i>Houston, TX, USA; Cölogne, FRG</i>)	191
Human Herpesvirus-6 (HHV-6). D. V. ABLASHI, S. Z. SALAHUDDIN, S. F. JOSEPHS, N. BALACHANDRAN, G. R. F. KRUEGER and R. C. GALLO (<i>Bethesda; Rockville, MD; Los Angeles, CA; Kansas City, KS, USA; Cologne, FRG</i>)	193
Postinfectious Chronic Fatigue Syndrome: Case History of Thirty Five Patients in Germany. A. HILGERS, G. R. F. KRUEGER, U. LEMBKE and A. RAMON (<i>Duesseldorf; Cologne, FRG</i>)	201
How Does the Subjective Experience of Stress Relate to the Breakdown of the Human Immune System? E. KRUEGER and G. R. F. KRUEGER (<i>Stevens Point, WI; Houston, TX, USA</i>)	207
Isolation of Human Herpesvirus-6 (HHV-6) from Patients with Collagen Vascular Diseases. G. R. F. KRUEGER, C. SANDER, A. HOFFMANN, A. BARTH, B. KOCH and M. BRAUN (<i>Cologne, FRG</i>)	217
Keratinocyte Lipid Fluidity under the Influence of Cholesterols, Hydrocortisones, "Active Lipid", Tocopherol and Retinoic Acid - A Fluorescence Polarization Study with Regard to Physiological and Pathophysiological Epidermopoiesis and its Therapeutic Accessibility. B. BONNEKOH, S. DAEFFLER, G. R. F. KRUEGER and G. MAHRLE (<i>Cologne, FRG; Houston, TX, USA</i>)	227
Rearrangements of Immunoglobulin- and BCR- Genes in Chronic Myeloid Leukemia. H. TESCH, C. FONATSCH and V. DIEHL (<i>Cologne; Lübeck, FRG</i>)	233
Altered Membrane Fluidity Occurs during Metabolic Impairment of Cardiac Myocytes. L. M. BUJA, J. C. MILLER and G. R. F. KRUEGER (<i>Cologne, FRG; Houston, TX, USA</i>)	239
Age Dependence and Prognostic Impact of Neuron Specific Enolase (NSE) in Children with Neuroblastoma. F. BERTHOLD, U. ENGELHARDT- FAHRNER, A. SCHNEIDER, R. SCHUMACHER and J. ZIESCHANG (<i>Cologne, FRG</i>)	245
Thymic Lymphocytes and Thymic Epithelial Cells in 4 Cases of Congenital Immunodeficiency. TH. STALLMACH (<i>Cologne, FRG</i>)	249
Human Herpesvirus-6 Infection May Predispose Cells for Superinfection by Other Viruses. M. SCHONNEBECK, G. R. F. KRUEGER, M. BRAUN, M. FISCHER, B. KOCH, D. V. ABLASHI and N. BALACHANDRAN (<i>Cologne, FRG; Bethesda, MD; Kansas City, KS, USA</i>)	255
Active Human Herpesvirus-6 (HHV-6) Infection Associated with Kikuchi-Fujimoto Disease and Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (SLE). A. HOFFMANN, E. KIRN, A. KUERTEN, CH. SANDER, G. R. F. KRUEGER and D. V. ABLASHI (<i>Cologne, FRG; Bethesda, MD, USA</i>) ...	265

Frequent Double Infection with Epstein-Barr Virus and Human Herpesvirus-6 in Patients with Acute Infectious Mononucleosis. G. BERTRAM, N. DREINER, G. R. F. KRUEGER, A. RAMON, D. V. ABLASHI, S. Z. SALAHUDDIN and N. BALACHANDRAN (<i>Cologne, FRG; Bethesda, MD; Kansas City, KS, USA</i>).....	271
Chronic Granulocytic Leukemia in Blastic Crisis. Prognosis Factors. V. SALES, J. ROJO, J. COLLAZO, E. LAGUNAS, E. AGUILAR and L. ALBISUA (<i>Mexico City, Mexico</i>).....	281
Clinical Indication and Diagnostic Techniques of Human Herpesvirus-6 (HHV-6) Infection. G. R. F. KRUEGER, D. V. ABLASHI, S. F. JOSHPHS, S. Z. SALAHUDDIN, U. LEMBKE, A. RAMON and G. BERTRAM (<i>Cologne, FRG; Washington, DC; Bethesda, MD, USA</i>).....	287
Non Hodgkin Lymphoma (NHL) of the Testicle. A Clinicopathologic Study of 19 Patients. J. ROJO, V. SALES, A. PAREDES and J. SORIANO (<i>Mexico City, Mexico</i>).....	297

Number 4

Response to Chemotherapy of Non-Small Cell Bronchial Rat Tumours Growing Subcutaneously or in the Lung. H.B. KAL, P.J.N. MEIJNDERS, A.H. VAN BERKEL, D.W. VAN BEKKUM (<i>Rijswijk, The Netherlands</i>)	301
Preclinical Screening of <i>in Vivo</i> Interactions between Myelopoietic Growth Factors and Antitumour Drugs for Therapy of Myeloid Leukaemia Patients (<i>Review</i>). H.T. HASSAN, H.R. MAURER (<i>Alexandria, Egypt; Berlin, Germany</i>)	307
Plasminogen Activator in Human Breast Cancer Cytosols- Revisited after Five Years. R. NG, D.J.A. SUTHERLAND, J.P. SZALAI, J.A. KELLEN (<i>Toronto, Ontario, Canada</i>)	313
Ras p21 Expression in Brain Tumours: Elevated Expression in Malignant Astrocytomas and Glioblastomas Multiforme. D. ARVANITIS, A. MALLIRI, D. ANTONIOU, S. LINARDOPOULOS, J.K. FIELD, D.A. SPANDIDOS (<i>Athens; Heraklion, Greece; Liverpool, U.K.</i>)	317
Quantification of Experimental Pulmonary Metastases by Image Analyzer. M. IWAHANA, A. TOHGO, N.G. TANAKA, Y. OSADA (<i>Tokyo, Japan</i>)	323
Pharmacological and Toxicological Studies on New Rh(I) Organometallic Complexes. D.G. CRACIUNESCU, V. SCARCIA, A. FURLANI, A. PAPAIOANNOU, E.P. IGLESIAS, M.P. ALONSO (<i>Madrid, Spain; Trieste, Italy</i>)	329
Modulation of N-Nitrosomethylurea Induced Mammary Tumorigenesis by Dietary Fat and Voluntary Exercise. L.A. COHEN, K. CHOI, J.-Y. BACKLUND, R. HARRIS, C.-X. WANG (<i>Valhalla, NY, USA</i>)	333
Cycle Changes in the Expression of Endometrial Proteins of the Mouse during the Normal Estrus Cycle. B. HORVAT (<i>Philadelphia, PA, USA</i>)	345
Emigration of Activated Leukocytes Augments Transvascular Permeability in Mesenteric Venules of Rat. K. OOKAWA, M. SATO, N. OHSHIMA (<i>Ibaraki, Japan</i>)	349
<i>In Vitro</i> Interferon and Virus Production at <i>in Vivo</i> Physiologic Oxygen Tensions. P. EBBESEN, F.D. TOTH, J.A. VILLADSEN, N. NØRSKOV - LAURITSEN (<i>Aarhus, Denmark; Debrecen, Hungary</i>)	355
<i>In Vitro</i> Fertilization of Oocytes from Polyovular Follicles in Mouse Ovaries Exposed Neonatally to Diethylstilbestrol. T. IGUCHI, K. KAMIYA, Y. UESUGI, K. SAYAMA, N. TAKASUGI (<i>Yokohama, Japan</i>)	359
Macrophage Involvement in the Antitumoral Effect of Nocardia-Delipidated Cell Mitogen. J. LEIBOVICI, S. HOENIG, A. PINCHASSOV, R. BAROT - CIORBARU (<i>Tel Aviv, Israel; Orsay, France</i>)	365
Chemosensitivity Spectrum of a Human Pleural Mesothelioma Xenograft Grown in Athymic Rats. C.-J. LINDÉN (<i>Lung, Sweden</i>)	375
The Regeneration of Triturus Limbs Deformed by a Carcinogen. N.P. ZILAKOS (<i>Athens, Greece</i>)	381

The Relationship between Cytotoxic Drug Exposure and Tumour Cell Kill, <i>in Vitro</i> and <i>in Vivo</i> . D.J. KERR, H.E. SMART (<i>Glasgow, U.K.</i>)	385
Prophylactic Anti-Tumor Effect of Hochu-Ekki-To (TJ41) by Enhancing Natural Killer Cell Activity. J.-M. CHO, N. SATO, K. KIKUCHI (<i>Sapporo, Japan</i>)	389
Multiple Administration of Carbonazepine, Typical and Atypical Antidepressant Drugs on Clonidine - Induced Hypoactivity in Mice. L. DE'ANGELIS (<i>Trieste, Italy</i>)	393
The Protective Effect of Guar Gum against Stress - Induced Gastric Ulcers in the Rat. E. HARJU, J. SAJANTI (<i>Tyräsylä, Finland</i>)	397
Estradiol Induced Changes in Tumor Growth and Steroid Receptor Content in a Heterotransplanted Human Endometrial Adenocarcinoma. G. HORVATH, M. FERNÖ, B. BALDETORP, R. CAMERON, J. RANSTAM (<i>Lund, Sweden</i>)	401
Embryopathic Action of N-Nitrosomethylurea in the Male Mouse Manifest for Three Generations. B.N. HEMSWORTH (<i>Cleveland, U.K.</i>)	407
Lack of Synergy between 5-Fluorouracil and Interferon- γ in the Treatment of Malignancy in the Rat. J.P. CODDE, J.A. VINES, P.A. VAN DER MEIDE, M.A. BURTON, B.N. GRAY (<i>Perth, W. Australia; Rijswijk, The Netherlands</i>)	413
Diagnosing Mammary Cancer among an Unselected Finnish Population. Proposal for Practical Improvements. E. HARJU, A.-L. VUORELA, R. KREES, L. PUNTO (<i>Juväskylä, Finland</i>)	419
Embryopathic Action of Ethylnitrosourea in the Male Mouse Manifest in the First Generation. B.N. HEMSWORTH (<i>Cleveland, U.K.</i>)	421
Antitumor Organometallics. II. Inhibitory Effects of Two Diphenyl - Antimony (III) Dithiophosphorus Derivatives on <i>in Vitro</i> and <i>in Vivo</i> Ehrlich Assites Tumor. C. SOCACIU, A. BARA, C. SILVESTRU, I. HAIDUC (<i>Cluj-Napoca, Romania</i>)	425
Cardioprotective Effects of Sodium Gamma - Hydroxybutyrate on Brain Induced Myocardial Injury. A. KOLIN, A. BREZINA, M. MAMELAK (<i>Toronto, Ontario, Canada</i>)	429
Immunogold Localization of a Nuclear Protein at Different States of the Cell Cycle in Normal and Tumor Cells. E.C. CHEW, A.S.O. YEUNG, S.B. CHEW, S.C.H. MOK, C.C. LIEW (<i>Hong Kong; Toronto, Ontario, Canada</i>)	433

Number 5

Special Issue on Recent Trends in Development

Edited by P.A. Tsonis

Recent Trends in Development. P.A. TSONIS (<i>Dayton, OH, USA</i>)	441
Models of Pattern Formation in Insect Oocytes. J.G. KUNKEL (<i>Amherst, MA, USA</i>)	443
The Molecular Basis of Positional Information. D. SUMMERBELL, J.C. SMITH and M. MADEN (<i>London, UK</i>)	457
The Amphibian Embryo: An Experimental Model for the <i>in Vivo</i> Analysis of Interactions between Embryonic Cells and Extracellular Matrix Molecules. J.-C. BOUCAUT, TH. DARRIBERE, D.L. SHI, J.-F. RIOU, M. DELARUE and K.E. JOHNSON (<i>Paris, France; Washington, DC, USA</i>)	473
Alkaline Phosphatases as Reporters of Developmental and Cancerous Events. N. FRÖHLANDER and J.L. MILLÁN (<i>La Jolla, CA, USA</i>)	483
Cellular Interactions with Fibronectin as a Model for Redundant Binding of Cells to Other Extracellular Matrix Proteins. W.S. ARGRAVES and K.R. GEHLSSEN (<i>Rockville, MD, USA</i>)	489
Programmed Cell Death (Apoptosis) in Murine Blastocysts: Extracellular Free-Radicals, Polyamines, and Other Cytotoxic Agents. R.E. PARCHMENT (<i>Dayton, OH, USA</i>)	493

The Macrophage: Hunter and Gatherer, R.A. LANG (<i>San Francisco, CA, USA</i>)	501
Cadherins and Associated Proteins. M.J. WHEELLOCK and K.A. KNUDSEN (<i>Toledo, OH; Wynnewood, PA, USA</i>)	505
Decision Making in Interstitial Stem Cells of Hydra. T.C.G. BOSCH and C.N. DAVID (<i>Munich, FRG</i>)	515
The Molecular Genetics of Tail Development in <i>Drosophila Melanogaster</i> . L.A. PERKINS and N. PERRIMON (<i>Boston, MA, USA</i>)	521
Late Events in Chondrocyte Differentiation: Hypertrophy, Type X Collagen Synthesis and Matrix Calcification. TH. M. SCHMID, D.K. BONEN, L. LUCHENE and TH. F. LINSEN-MAYER (<i>Chicago, IL; Boston, MA, USA</i>)	533
Amphibian Limb Regeneration. P.A. TSONIS (<i>Dayton, OH, USA</i>)	541

Number 6

Special Issue on Immunotherapy of Cancer Edited by C.J. Ioannides and W. Den Otter

Concepts in Immunotherapy of Cancer: Introduction. C.J. IOANNIDES, W. DEN OTTER (<i>Houston, TX, USA; Utrecht, The Netherlands</i>)	551
Cancer Therapy with Tumor-Infiltrating Lymphocytes: Evaluation of Potential and Limitations. T.L. WHITESIDE (<i>Pittsburgh, PA, USA</i>)	553
Effective Immunotherapy with Local Low Doses of Interleukin-2 W. DEN OTTER, R.A. MAAS, J.W. KOTEN, H.F.J. DULLENS, M. BERNSSEN, W.R. KLEIN, V.P.M.G. RUTTEN, P.A. STEERENBERG, L. BALEMANS, E.J. RUITENBERG, F.W. GRAHAM HILL, A.P.M. HEINTZ (<i>Utrecht; Bilthoven; Amsterdam, The Netherlands; Harare, Zimbabwe</i>).....	561
Cancer Therapy with Interleukins 1,4 and 6 and Combinations of Cytokines: A Review. H.F.J. DULLENS, C.L. DE WIT (<i>Utrecht, The Netherlands</i>)	567
Granulocyte-Macrophage Colony Stimulating Factor (GM-CSF) in the Management of Cancer. D. FAN, C.A. O' BRIAN, C.G. IOANNIDES, R.K. CLYNE (<i>Houston, TX, USA</i>)	571
Intracavitary Beta-Interferon for the Management of Pleural and/or abdominal Effusions in Patients with Advanced Cancer Refractory to Chemotherapy. V. GEBBIA, A. RUSSO, N. GEBBIA, R. VALENZA, A. TESTA, L. RAUSA, S. PALMERI (<i>Palermo, Italy</i>)	579
Interleukin 6 and Cancer Therapy. O. MARTÍNEZ-MAZA, J.S. BEREK (<i>Los Angeles, CA, USA</i>).....	583
Interferons in the Treatment of Malignancies. D. KARDAMAKIS (<i>Athens, Greece</i>).....	589
Non Specific Immunotherapy with B.C.G. in Superficial Bladder Cancer: An Overview. A.P.M. VAN DER MEIJDEN (<i>Hertogenbosch, The Netherlands</i>).....	599
The Present Status of BCG Therapy in the Veterinary Practise. W.R. KLEIN, V.P.M.G. RUTTEN, P.A. STEERENBERG, E.J. RUITENBERG (<i>Utrecht; Bilthoven; Amsterdam, The Netherlands</i>).....	605
Adoptive Transfer of Activated Human Autologous Macrophages Results in Regression of Transplanted Human Melanoma Cells in Scid Mice. N.G. CHAKRABORTY, T. OKINO, P. STABACH, S.J. PADULA, H. YAMASE, E. MORSE, R.I. SHA' AFI, D.R. TWARDZIK, L.J. SHULTZ, B. MUKHERJI (<i>Farmington, CT; Seattle, WA; Bar Harbor, ME, USA</i>).....	609
Anti-Idiotype Cancer Vaccines: Pre-clinical and Clinical Studies. D. HERLYN, A. BENDEN, M. KANE, R. SOMASUNDARAM, J. ZALOUDI, M. SPERLAGH, G. MARKS, E. HART, C. RALPH, M. WETTENDORFF, M. MASTRANGELO (<i>Philadelphia, PA, USA</i>)	615
Recognition of Transformed Cells by Autologous Lymphocytes: A Review. E. KLEIN, E. KEDAR, P. WANG, F. VANKY (<i>Stockholm, Sweden; Jerusalem, Israel</i>).....	625

Suppressor Function of Lymphocytes Activated in *in Vitro* Co-Culture against Autologous Tumor Cells and Expanded in Interleukin-2. T. OKINO, N.G. CHAKRABORTY, M.T. ERGIN, B. MUKHERJI (*Farmington, CT, USA*)..... 631

Mechanisms of Tumor Regression Induced by Low Doses Interleukin-2. R.A. MAAS, H.F.J. DULLENS, W. DEN OTTER (*Utrecht, The Netherlands*) 637

BCG Therapy for Superficial Bladder Cancer: Fundamental Aspects. M.A. HUDSON, T.L. RATLIFF (*Houston, TX; St. Louis, MO, USA*)..... 643

Immunological Properties of Melanoma Tumor-Infiltrating Lymphocytes before and after IL-2-based Biotherapies. K. ITOH, C.M. BALCH, J.L. MURRAY, D.R. PARKINSON, A.B. MARKOWITZ, M. TALPAZ, K. LEE, A.A. ZUKIWSKI, M.I. ROSS, S.S. LEGHA, K. HAYAKAWA, M.A. SALMERON, L.B. AUGUSTUS (*Houston, TX, USA*) 647

Mechanism of BCG Induced Regression of Line 10 Hepatocarcinoma in the Guinea Pig. P.A. STEERENBERG, W.H. DE JONG, E.J. RUITENBERG (*Bilthoven; Amsterdam, The Netherlands*)..... 655

Immunogenicity and Involvement in the Host's Effector Mechanisms of the Oncogene-Induced Transformation-Associated Cell Surface Antigens. N. SATO, J.-M. CHO, T. TAKASHIMA, N. TSUBOI, T. NIHEI, Y. WADA, K. KIKUCHI (*Sapporo, Japan*)..... 663

Leukocytes and Cytokines in the Urine of Superficial Bladder Cancer Patients after Intravesical Immunotherapy with Bacillus Calmette-Guerin. E.C. DE BOER, W.H. DE JONG, P.A. STEERENBERG, A.P.M. VAN DER MEIJDEN, L.A. AARDEN, F.M.J. DEBRUYNE, E.J. RUITENBERG (*Bilthoven, Nijmegen; Hertogenbosch; Utrecht; Amsterdam, The Netherlands*) 671

Tumour Regression by IL-2 Mediated Stagnation of Blood Flow. H.J.I. DE MIK, J.W. KOTEN, R.A. MAAS, H.F.J. DULLENS, W. DEN OTTER (*Utrecht, The Netherlands*)..... 679

Index of Volume 5

Errata

Page 108: Figure 2 should appear with the right side up.

Page 180, left column, line 10 should read:

similar conditions. A spectral width of ± 2000 Hz and 2048 data points

Page 180, left column, line 35 should read:

$$pH = pK + \log[\delta_{\alpha-P_i} - \delta(H_2PO_4)]/[\delta(H_2PO_4) - \delta_{\alpha-P_i}]$$

Page 180, left column, line 47 should read:

$$[Mg^{++}] = K_d((\delta_{A-TP} - \delta_{\alpha-B})/(\delta_{\alpha-B} - \delta_{MgA-TP}))$$

Page 197: Photograph was printed inverted.

Volume 4 (1990): Page 341, right column, line 6 should read:

Furthermore, populations of metaphase chromosomes treated

Volume 4 (1990): Page 342, right column, line 8 should read:

interior of the chromosomes (117). *In vitro* exposure to

Volume 4 (1990): Page 347, left column, line 43 should read:

preparations are small and compact compared to the long thin

Subject Index

- Activated T cells, interleukin -2, 631
 Adriamycin, cardiotoxicity, P-31 nuclear magnetic resonance, 13
 AIDS, GM-CSF, 571
 Alkaline phosphatases, development, cancer, 483
 Amphibia, limb regeneration, carcinogens, 381, 541
 Amphibian embryo, extracellular matrix, 473
 Anthracyclines, cardiotoxicity, 61
 Anticancer drugs, 7, 13, 23, 33, 307, 329, 385, 425
 Antidepressant drugs, mice, carbamazepine, 393
 Anti-idiotypic antibody, gastrointestinal carcinoma, cancer vaccine, 615
 Antitrypanosomic drugs, rhodium (I) complexes, 329
 Apoptosis, embryonic development, polyamines, 493
 Autologous lymphocytes, immunity, transformed cells, 625
- BCG, animals, immunotherapy, 605
 BCG, superficial-bladder cancer, 599, 643, 671
 BCG, tumor regression, guinea pig, 655
 bcr-genes, chronic myeloid leukemia, 233
 Blastocyst, apoptosis, polyamines, free radicals, 493
 Brain tumors, *ras* p21 expression, 314
 Breast cancer cytosols, plasminogen activator, 313
 Bromocriptine-mesilate, uterine adenomyosis, 107
- Cadherins, cell adhesion, catenins, 505
 Calcification, chondrocyte hypertrophy, eggshell 533
 Calcium antagonists, reserpine, doxorubicin storage, 171
 Carbamazepine, antidepressants, mice, 393
 Carcinogenesis, 333, 381, 85, 95
 Cardiac myocytes, membrane fluidity, hypoxia, 239
 Cardiotoxicity, adriamycin, P-31 NMR, 13, 61
 Carotene, melanoma, skin cancer, 65
 Catenins, cell adhesion, 505
 Cell adhesion, cadherins, 505
 Cell cycle, nuclear protein, tumor cells, 433
 Cell cycle, squamous cell carcinoma, xenograft, 137
 Chemosensitivity, 301, 375, 571
 Chemotherapy, 23, 33, 41, 119, 301, 323, 385
 Choline deficiency, spermatogenesis, 153
 Chondrocyte differentiation, collagen type X, calcification, 533
 Chronic fatigue syndrome, herpesvirus 6, 201, 207
 Chronic granulocytic leukemia, prognosis, 281
 Chronic myeloid leukemia, bcr-genes, immunoglobulin, 255
 Cimetidine, neuromuscular transmission, 57
 Cisplatin, squamous cell carcinoma, xenograft, 23
 Cisplatin-induced anemia, erythropoietin, 149
 Clofazimine, SCE, bone marrow cells, mice, 69
 Clonidine, antidepressant drugs, 393
 Clonogenic cell survival, cytotoxic drugs, xenografts, 385
 Collagen vascular diseases, herpesvirus 6, 217
 Colon cancer cells, rat, cytostasis mechanism, 49
 Cyclophosphamide, 33
 Cytogenetics, 17
 Cytokines, 561, 567, 583, 631, 637, 647, 649
 Cytokines, preclinical screening, anticancer drugs, 307
 Cytokines, superficial bladder cancer, BCG, 671
 Cytosine arabinoside, 33
 Cytostasis, mechanism, neutrophils, rat, colon cancer cells, 49
- Development, 443, 457, 473, 483, 493, 501, 505, 515, 521, 533, 541
- Diabetes, *Eugenia jambolana*, *Ficus bengalensis*, 143
 Dietary fat, mammary tumorigenesis, NMU, 333
 Diethylstilbestrol, fertilization in vitro, 359
 Differentiation, positional information, 457
 Dihydrofolate reductase, human leukemia, cells, 7
 Diphenyl-Antimony (III) dithiophosphorus derivatives, anti-tumor action, 425
 Doxorubicin storage, reserpine, calcium antagonists, 171
 Drosophila, pattern formation, molecular genetics, 521
- Effusion, abdominal, pleural, β -interferon, 579
 Embryonic development, apoptosis, polyamines, 493
 Embryopathic action, NMU, unice, 407, 421
 Endometrial adenocarcinoma, estradiol, nude mice, 401
 Endometrial adenocarcinoma, hormone dependency, nude mice, 185
 Endometrium, estrus, proteins, 345
 Enolase, neuron specific, neuroblastoma, 245
 Epidermis, lipid fluidity, retinoids, 227
 Epstein-Barr virus, chronic fatigue syndrome, 201
 Erythropoietin, cisplatin, anemia, hamsters, 149
 Estradiol treatment, tumor growth, human endometrial adenocarcinoma, nude mice, 401
 Estrus cycle, proteins, endometrium, 345
 Extracellular matrix, embryonic cells, interactions, 473
- Famotidine, neuromuscular transmission, 53
 Fertilization *in vitro*, polyovular follicles, diethylstilbestrol, 359
 Fibronectin, acushibian embryo, 473
 Fibronectin, integrins, cellular interaction, 489
 5-Fluorouracil, interferon- γ , experimental cancer, 413
 Free radicals, blastocyst, apoptosis, 493
 Fungi, hydrazines, cancer, 91
- β -Galactoside-specific lectin, immunomodulation, mice, 29
 Gastrulation, amphibian embryo, 473
 Genotoxicity, clofazimine, 69
 Granulocyte-macrophage colony stimulating factor, cancer, 571
 Guar gum, stress ulcer, nutrition, 397
- H2 Receptors, antagonists, 53, 57
 Hematopoiesis, GM-CSF, 571
 Hepatic metabolism, ^{31}P Nuclear magnetic resonance spectroscopy, 179
 Herpesvirus 6, 193, 201, 217, 255, 265, 271, 287
 Hochu-Ekki-To (Tz41), antitumor effect, 389
 Hormone dependency, endometrial adenocarcinoma, nude mice, 185
 Hydra, interstitial stem cells, differentiation, 515
 Hydrazines, fungi, cancer, 91
 Hypoxia, cardiac myocytes, 239
- m-IBG, neuroblastoma, mice, 123
 Image analysis, pulmonary metastases, mice, 323
 Immune deficiency, chronic fatigue syndrome, 201
 Immune system, stress, 207
 Immunity, autologous lymphocytes, EBV transformation, 625
 Immunodeficiency, congenital, thymus, 249
 Immunoglobulin-genes, chronic myeloid leukemia, 233
 Immunogenicity, neoplastic transformation, oncogenes, 663
 Immunomodulation, β -galactoside-specific lectin, 29

- Immunopathology, 191, 193, 201, 207, 217, 227, 233, 239, 245, 249, 255, 265, 271, 281, 287, 297
- Immunosuppression, mycobacterial fraction, mice, 71
- Immunotherapy, 553, 561, 567, 571, 579, 583, 589, 599, 605, 609, 615, 625, 631, 637, 643, 647, 655, 663, 671, 679
- Infectious mononucleosis, EBV, herpesvirus 6, 271
- ¹¹¹In-labelled monoclonal antibodies, anti-PAP, anti PSA, 159
- Insect oocytes, pattern formation, 443
- Insulinase inhibition, plant extracts, 143
- Insulin secretion, *Eugenia jambolana*, 143
- Integrins, fibronectin, 489
- β -Interferon, abdominal effusion, cancer, 579
- Interferon- γ , 5-FU, combination, experimental cancer, 413
- Interferon, oxygen tension, virus, 355
- Interleukin-1, cancer therapy, 567
- Interleukin-2, cancer therapy, 561, 631, 637, 647, 679
- Interleukin-4, cancer therapy 567
- Interleukin-6, cancer therapy, 567, 583
- Internuclear bridges, hepatocytes, ultrastructure, 167
- Interstitial stem cells, hydra, 515
- Intraperitoneal catheters, ovarian cancer, 119
- Intravital microscopy, leukocyte emigration, rat, 349
- Keratinocytes, lipid fluidity, cholesterol, 227
- Kikuchi-Fujimoto disease, herpesvirus 6, 265
- Lactation, mammary growth, pregnancy-dependent mammary tumor, 111
- Leukemia, 307, 7, 281
- Leukemia cells, human, DHFR, PCR assay, 7
- Leukocyte emigration, intravital microscopy, rat, 349
- Limb regeneration, amphibia, 381, 541
- Lipid fluidity, epidermis, 227
- Lung tumours, rat, chemosensitivity, 301
- Lymphoblastoid lines, genetic instability, human, 17
- Lymphoma, testicular, 297
- Macrophage activation, paramylon derivative, 101
- Macrophage, melanoma, adoptive transfer, scid mice, 609
- Macrophage, tissue remodelling, 501
- Macrophages, immunotherapy, 365
- Mammary carcinoma, pulsed magnetic field, 39
- Mammary tumorigenesis, dietary fat, exercise, 333
- Mammography, fine needle biopsy, 419
- Melanoma, adoptive transfer of macrophages, 609
- Melanoma, TIL, immunotherapy, 647
- Melanoma, Zinc, carotene, retinol, 65
- Membrane fluidity, cardiac myocytes, 239
- Mesothelioma, chemosensitivity, athymic rats, 375
- Metastasis, pulmonary, image analysis, mice, 323
- Methionine deficiency, reproductive toxicology, 153
- Methotrexate resistance, DHFR, gene expression, 7
- Mistletoe, immunomodulation, 29
- Monoclonal antibody BR55-2, tumor cell lysis, growth inhibition, 79
- Monoclonal antibody GA733, cancer vaccine, gastrointestinal carcinoma, 615
- Monoclonal antibody, ¹¹¹In-labelled, anti-PAP, anti-PSA, 159
- Morphogenetic signals, hydra, 515
- Mycobacterial fraction, immunosuppression, 71
- Myelocytic leukemia, cytokines, anticancer drugs, 307
- Myocardial injury, γ -hydroxybutyrate, morphometry, 429
- Nb rat, prostate cancer, chemotherapy, 41
- Neuroblastoma, prognosis, neuron specific enolase, 245
- Neuroblastoma, xenograft, m-IBG, mice, 123
- Neuromuscular transmission, famotidine, cimetidine, 53, 57
- Nitrosamines, rat, carcinogenesis, 85
- N-Nitrosomethylurea, embryopathic action, mouse, 407, 421
- NK cells, TJ41, 389
- Nocardia-delipidated cell mitogen, immunotherapy, macrophage, 365
- Nuclear protein, cell cycle, tumor cells, 433
- Nuclear rotation, hepatocytes, ultrastructure, 167
- Nutrition, parenteral, wound healing, starvation, rabbit, 43
- Nutrition, stress ulcer, guar gum, 397
- Obesity, protection, tree-peony, mice, 115
- Oligosaccharide Y, monoclonal antibody BR55-2, 79
- Oncogenes, 317, 663
- Ovarian cancer, intraperitoneal treatment, 119
- Oxygen, Sendai virus production, interferon, 355
- Paramylon, N, N-dimethylaminoethyl -, antimicrobial spectrum, 101
- Pattern formation, drosophila, 521
- Pattern formation, insect oocytes, 443
- PCR assay, DHFR, gene expression, 7
- Plasminogen activator, breast cancer cytosols, human, 313
- Polyamine, normal growth, mouse, 91
- Polyamines, apoptosis, blastocyst, 493
- Positional information, cellular differentiation, 457
- Preclinical screening, myelopoietic growth factors, anticancer drugs, 307
- Pregnancy-associated murine protein 1-, intestinal parasites, 175
- Pregnancy-dependent mammary tumor, lactation, 111
- Prostate cancer, combination chemotherapy, Nb rat, 41
- Prostatic cancer, mAb, anti-PAP, anti-PSA, human tumor xenografts, 159
- Protein deficiency, diet, reproductive toxicology, 153
- Protein kinase C, tumor vaccines, 1
- Psychoneuroimmunology, stress, 207
- Pulsed magnetic field, carcinoma, mice, 39
- Radioimaging, prostatic cancer, 159
- Ranitidine, neuromuscular transmission, 57
- Ras p21, brain tumors, 317
- Reserpine, doxorubicin storage, calcium antagonists, 171
- Retinoids, lipid fluidity, keratinocytes, 227
- Retinol, melanoma, skin cancer, 65
- Rheumatoid arthritis, herpesvirus 6, 217
- Rhodium (I) complexes, pharmacology, toxicology, 329
- Sarcoid, BCG, animals, immunotherapy, 605
- Sister Chromatid Exchanges, clofazimine, 69
- Skeletal muscle, anticancer drugs, 33
- Skin cancer, zinc, carotene, retinol, 65
- Smooth muscle, anticancer drugs, 33
- Spermatogenesis, protein-deficiency, 153
- Spleen white pulp depletion, immunotherapy, 365
- Squamous cell carcinoma, xenograft, cisplatin, 23
- Squamous cell carcinoma, xenograft, nude mice, cell kinetics, 137
- Steroids, urine, ovary, adrenal, 127
- Stress, human immune system, malignant tumors, 207
- Stress, ulcer, guar gum, nutrition, 397
- Superficial bladder cancer, BCG, 599, 643
- Systemic lupus erythematosus, herpesvirus 6, 217 265
- T cell activation, tumor vaccines, 1
- Testicular lymphoma, malignant, 297
- Thymus, congenital immunodeficiency, 249
- Tissue remodelling, macrophage, 501
- Transformation, neoplastic, immune response, 663

- Transvascular permeability leukocyte emigration, 349
 Tree-peony, obesity protection, 115
 Trematode, infection, pregnancy-associated murine protein-1, 175
 Tumor cell kill, cytotoxic drugs, *in vitro*, *in vivo*, 385
 Tumor cell lysis, monoclonal antibody BR55-2, 79
 Tumor growth inhibition, monoclonal antibody BR55-2, 79
 Tumor-infiltrating lymphocytes, cancer therapy, 553, 647
- Ulcer, gastric, nutrition, stress, 397
 Urinary steroids, kinetics, 127
 Uterine adenomyosis, prolactin, bromocriptine-mesilate, 107
- Vaccine, cancer-, gastrointestinal carcinoma, 615
 Vaccines, tumor, protein kinase C, 1
 Viral superinfection, herpesvirus 6, 249
 Virus production, Sendai, interferon, oxygen, 355
 Vitamin E, lipid fluidity, keratinocytes, 227
- Wound healing, total parenteral nutrition, 43
- Xenografts, 23, 123, 137, 159, 185, 301, 375, 385, 401, 413
- Zinc, melanoma, skin cancer, 65

Author Index

- Aarden LA, 671
 Ablashi DV, 193, 255, 265, 287
 Achrekar S, 143
 Aguilar E, 281
 Albisua L, 281
 Alonso MP, 329
 Anderson D, 153
 Antoniou D, 317
 Argraves WS, 489
 Arvanitis D, 317
 Aso Y, 127
 Augustus LB, 647
- Backlund J-Y, 333
 Balachandran N, 193, 255, 271
 Balch CM, 647
 Baldetorp B, 185, 401
 Balemans L, 561
 Bara A, 425
 Barni S, 167
 Barot-Ciorbaru R, 365
 Barthu A, 217
 Basu T, 65
 Bellossi A, 39
 Benden A, 615
 Ben-Efraim S, 71
 Berek JS, 583
 Berthold F, 245
 Bertram G, 271, 287
 Beuth J, 29
 Bindseil E, 175
 Bonen DK, 533
 Bonnekoh B, 227
 Bosch TCG, 515
 Bossa R, 57, 61
 Boucaut J-C, 473
 Bowen JM, 1
 Braun M, 217, 255
 Breschi MC, 171
 Brezina A, 429
 Brinkworth MH, 153
 Buja LM, 191, 239
 Burton MA, 413
- Butland T, 13
- Cameron R, 185, 401
 Chakrabarty NG, 609, 631
 Chew EC, 433
 Chew SB, 433
 Chiericozzi M, 57
 Cho J-M, 389, 663
 Choi K, 333
 Citarrella P, 149
 Clyne RK, 571
 Codde JP, 413
 Cohen LA, 333
 Collazzo J, 281
 Craciunescu DG, 329
- Daeffler S, 227
 Darribere Th, 473
 Das RK, 69
 Dash BC, 69
 David CN, 515
 De Angelis L, 393
 De Boer EC, 671
 Debruyne FMJ, 671
 De Jong WH, 655, 671
 Delarue M, 473
 De Mik HJJ, 679
 Den Otter W, 561, 637, 679
 Desplaces A, 39
 De Wit Cl, 567
 Diehl V, 233
 Drago JR, 41
 Dreiner N, 271
 Driedger AA, 13, 179
 Dullens HFJ, 561, 567, 637, 679
 Durbidge M, 123
- Ebbesen P, 355
 Efstathiou G, 57, 61
 Engelhardt-Fahrner U, 245
 Ergin MT, 631
- Fady C, 49
 Fan D, 571
 Fernö M, 185, 401
 Field JK, 317
 Fischer M, 255
 Fonatsch C, 233
 Freedman RS, 1
 Fröhlander N, 483
 Fujimaki M, 101
 Furlani A, 329
 Furukowa K, 17
- Gabius H-J, 29
 Galatulas I, 57, 61
 Gallo RC, 193
 Gebbia N, 579
 Gebbia V, 149, 579
 Gehlsen KR, 489
 Graham Hill FW, 561
 Gray BN, 413
 Gupta NJ, 17
- Haiduc I, 425
 Halperin D, 71
 Han H, 7
 Harju EJ, 43, 397, 419
 Harris R, 333
 Hart E, 615
 Hassan HR, 307
 Hau J, 175
 Haukipuro KA, 43
 Havouis R, 91
 Hayakawa K, 647
 Heintz APM, 561
 Hemsworth BN, 407, 421
 Herlyn D, 615
 Hilgers A, 201
 Hoenig S, 365
 Hoffmann A, 217, 265
 Hopwood VL, 17
 Horvat B, 345
 Horvath G, 185, 401
 Hudson MA, 643
- Ichikawa S, 101
 Iglesias EP, 329
 Iguchi T, 359
 Inoba T, 111
 Inatomi H, 115
 Inch WR, 13
 Inculet RJ, 179
 Ioannides CG, 1, 571
 Itoh K, 647
 Ivalo Andersen LL, 175
 Iwabuchi T, 115
 Iwahana M, 323
- Jerry LM, 65
 Johnson KE, 473
 Josephs SF, 193, 287
- Kaklij GS, 143
 Kal HB, 301
 Källén A, 137
 Kamiya K, 359
 Kane M, 615
 Kardamakis D, 589
 Kawashima S, 107
 Kedar E, 625
 Kelkor SM, 143
 Kellen JA, 313
 Kerr DJ, 385
 Kikuchi K, 101, 389, 663
 Kirn E, 265
 Klein E, 625
 Klein WR, 561 605
 Knudsen KA, 505
 Ko HL, 29
 Koch B, 217, 255
 Kodama M, 127
 Kodama T, 127
 Kolin A, 429
 Komatsu N, 101
 Koprowski H, 79
 Koten JW, 561, 679
 Kovatch RM, 85
 Krees R, 419

- Krueger E, 207
 Krueger GRF, 191, 193, 207, 217, 227, 239, 255, 265, 271, 287
 Kuerten A, 265
 Kunkel JG, 443
- Lagunas E, 281
 Laine A, 159
 Lang RA, 501
 Lee K, 647
 Legha SS, 647
 Leibovici J, 365
 Lembke U, 201, 287
 Liew CC, 433
 Lijinsky W, 85
 Linardopoulos JK, 317
 Lindahl Krog N, 175
 Lindén C-J, 375
 Linsenmayer ThF, 533
 Loibner H, 79
 Lot TY, 33
 Lubeck MD, 79
 Luchene L, 533
 Lybak S, 23
- Maas RA, 561, 637, 679
 Maden M, 457
 Mähle C-G, 119
 Mahrle G, 227
 Malliri A, 317
 Mamelak M, 429
 Markowitz AB, 647
 Marks G, 615
 Marsh GD, 13, 179
 Martin C, 91
 Martínez-Maza O, 583
 Mastrangelo M, 615
 Maurer HB, 307
 McDonald Smith J, 79
 Meijnders AH, 301
 Millan JL, 483
 Miller JC, 239
 Miyachi H, 7
 Mok SCH, 433
 Mori J-I, 111
 Mori T, 107
 Morse E, 609
 Moulinoux JP, 91
 Mukherji B, 609, 631
 Murray IPC, 123
 Murray JL, 647
- Nagasawa H, 107, 111, 115
 Nihei T, 663
 Ninci MA, 57, 61
 Nørskov-Lauritsen N, 355
- O'Brian CA 1, 571
 Ohshima N, 349
 Okino T, 609, 631
 Onwakeme KG, 33
 Ookawa K, 349
 Osada Y, 323
- Padula SJ, 609
 Palmeri S, 149, 579
 Papaioannou A, 329
 Paparelli A, 171
 Paredes A, 297
 Parkinson DR, 647
 Parchment RE, 493
 Patenia R, 1
 Pathak S, 17
 Peemoeller H, 13
 Pelkonen I, 159
 Pellegrini A, 171
 Perälä M, 159
 Perkins LA, 521
 Perrimon N, 521
 Pinchassov A, 465
 Pulverer G, 29
 Punto L, 419
- Quemener V, 91
- Ralph C, 615
 Ramon A, 191, 201, 271, 287
 Ransa L, 579
 Ranstam J, 185, 401
 Rashid G, 71
 Ratliff TL, 643
 Rausa L, 149
 Reisser D, 49
 Riou J-F, 473
 Risteli L, 43
 Rogo KO, 119
 Rojo J, 281, 297
 Ross MI, 647
 Roy B, 69
 Ruitenberg EJ, 561, 605, 655, 671
 Russo A, 579
- Rutten A, 579
 Rydell R, 23
- Saavedra JE, 85
 Sahaspabuddhe CG, 17
 Sajanti J, 397
 Sakagami H, 101
 Salahuddin SZ, 193, 271, 287
 Sales V, 281, 297
 Salmeron MA, 647
 Sander C, 217, 265
 Sanford SE, 13
 Sato M, 349
 Sato N, 389, 663
 Sato T, 101
 Sayama K, 359
 Scanlon KI, 7
 Scarcia V, 329
 Scherini E, 167
 Schmid ThM, 533
 Schneeberger AL, 179
 Schneider A, 245
 Scholz D, 79
 Schonnebeck M, 255
 Schumacher R, 245
 Sensui N, 111
 Sha 'afi RI, 609
 Shi DL, 473
 Shultz LJ, 609
 Silverstru C, 425
 Siu TO, 65
 Smart HE, 385
 Smith J, 41
 Smith JC, 457
 Socaciu C, 425
 Soldani P, 171
 Somasundaram R, 615
 Soriano J, 297
 Spandidos DA, 317
 Sperlagh M, 615
 Sprague C, 13
 Stabach P, 609
 Stallmach T, 249
 Steerenberg PA, 561, 605, 655, 671
 Stendahl U, 119
 Steplewski Z, 79
 Summerbell D, 457
 Sutheland DJA, 313
 Suzuki M, 111
 Szalai JA, 313
- Takashima T, 663
- Takasugi N, 359
 Takeda M, 101
 Talpaz M, 647
 Tanaka NG, 323
 Taylor D, 123
 Tesch H, 233
 Testa A, 579
 Thompson RT, 13, 179
 Tohgo A, 323
 Totani R, 127
 Toth B, 95
 Toth FD, 355
 Tsonis PA, 441, 541
 Tsuboi N, 663
 Twardzik DR, 609
- Uesugi Y, 359
- Valenza R, 149, 579
 Van Bekkum DW, 301
 Van Berkel AH, 301
 Van der Meide PA, 413
 Van der Meijden APM, 599, 671
 Van der Wall H, 123
 Vanky F, 625
 Vihko P, 159
 Vihko R, 159
 Villadsen JA, 355
 Vines JA, 413
 Vuorela A-L, 419
- Wada C, 101
 Wada Y, 663
 Wang C-X, 333
 Wang P, 625
 Ward N, 1
 Wennerberg J, 23, 137
 Wettendorff M, 615
 Wheelock MJ, 505
 White L, 123
 Whiteside TL, 553
 Willén R, 23
- Yamamuro Y, 111
 Yamase H, 609
 Yeung ASO, 433
- Zalondik I, 615
 Zan-Bar I, 71
 Zätterström UK, 137
 Zieschang J, 245
 Zilakos NP, 381
 Zukiwski AA, 647

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Decision Making in Interstitial Stem Cells of Hydra

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Abstract. *Interstitial stem cells in Hydra are a continuously proliferating and differentiating cell population. They represent a useful model system for studying mechanisms controlling stem cell differentiation. Here we review our current knowledge of the differentiation potential of these cells. Interstitial stem cells are multipotent and able to differentiate into several different cell types. The differentiation decisions appear to be controlled by positional signals and by the composition of the cellular environment. Since interstitial stem cells can be cultured in an in vivo environment and appear to be accessible to experimental manipulation by a range of new molecular techniques, an in vivo analysis of the molecular mechanisms underlying stem cell decision making can now be approached.*

Introduction

The freshwater polyp *Hydra* is a phylogenetically ancient multicellular organism with a relatively simple tissue structure. During asexual growth of the polyp its nerve cells, gland cells and nematocytes arise from a population of interstitial stem cells. Since these stem cells are a continuously proliferating and differentiating cell population which can be cultured and analyzed in an *in vivo* environment, they represent a useful model system for analysing the mechanisms controlling stem cell differentiation. In this review we discuss the differentiation behavior of these cells and the factors influencing it. We demonstrate that the interstitial stem cells are multipotent in the sense that they are able to differentiate into somatic cells (nematocytes, nerve cells and gland cells) as well as into germ line cells (sperm and eggs). The differentiation decisions appear to be controlled by morphogenetic signals associated with the position of stem cells within the

body column as well as by the composition of the cellular environment and the presence of neuropeptides. We conclude by showing that hydra stem cells appear to be accessible to experimental manipulation by a range of new molecular techniques so that now an *in vivo* analysis of the molecular mechanisms underlying stem cell decision making can be approached.

In vivo cloning of interstitial stem cells in hydra

The main evidence for interstitial stem cells in *Hydra* comes from *in vivo* cloning experiments (1, 2). To prepare interstitial stem cell clones, small numbers of dissociated donor cells were mixed with large numbers of host cells and centrifuged to form aggregates which then regenerated normal polyps. In such regenerated polyps of *Hydra magnipapillata* all stem cell clones were capable of differentiating somatic cells, *i.e.* nerve cells, nematocytes and gland cells (2). Since 87 out of 92 clones could also give rise to male and female gametes, we concluded that *H. magnipapillata* contains multipotent stem cells capable of germ line and somatic differentiation. Recently, evidence for such a multipotent stem cell population has also been found in a second species of hydra, *H. oligactis* (3).

In numerous cloning experiments no stem cell clones were found containing only one differentiated type of somatic cells. Thus, there is no evidence for extensively proliferating subpopulations of somatic intermediates (e.g., nerve precursors) in hydra. This is supported by the observation that in tissue which displays extensive nerve cell differentiation (the peduncle region of *H. oligactis* polyps) only stem cells and postmitotic nerve cell precursors are present (4). Thus, signals inducing nerve cell differentiation appear to affect the multipotent stem cells themselves.

In the gamete differentiation pathway, however, unipotent subpopulations of interstitial cells have been isolated. They are capable of extensive proliferation but committed to either spermatogenesis (5) or oogenesis (3). These unipotent stem cells are present in asexually proliferating polyps in low numbers and dividing at a slower rate than their multipotent

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Key Words: Hydra, interstitial stem cells, differentiation, morphogenetic signals.

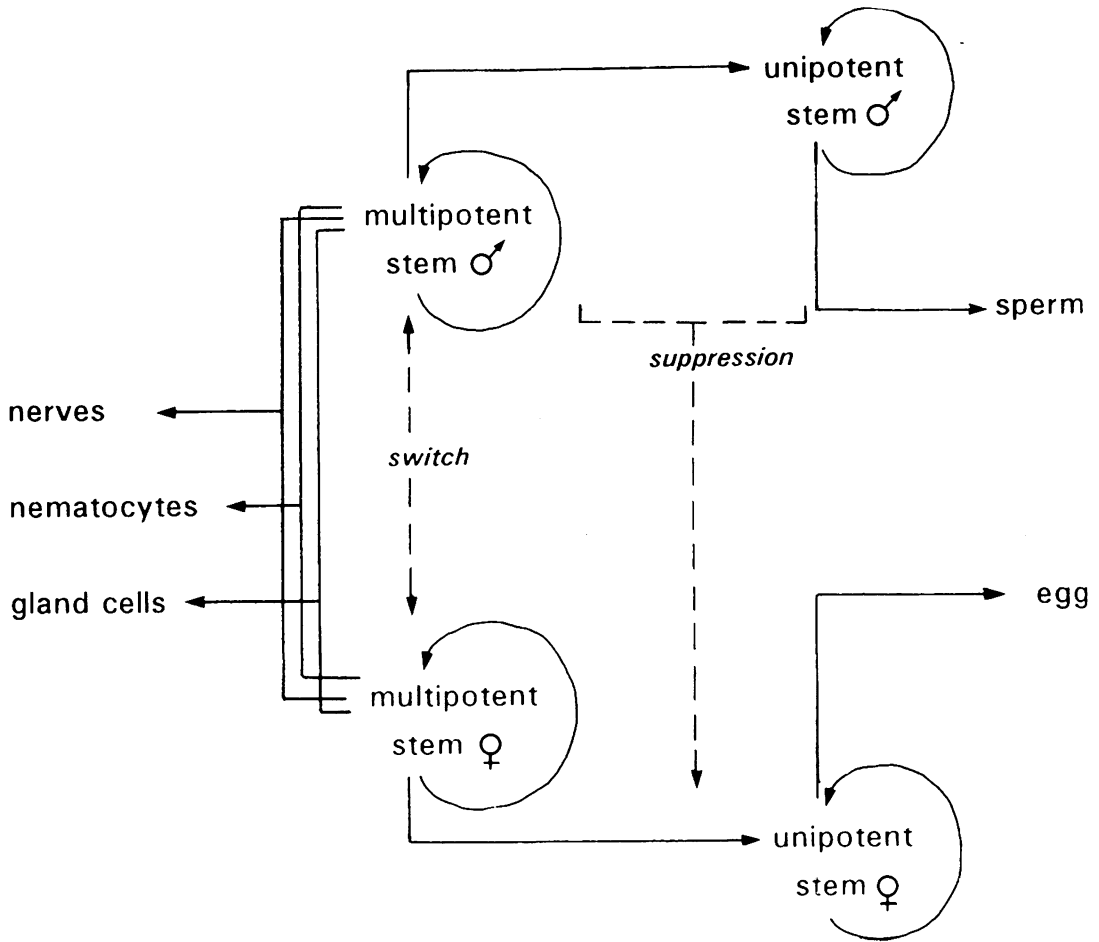


Figure 1. Schematic diagram of the interstitial stem cells generating somatic and germ cells (modified from Bosch and David, 1986).

precursor cells (6). In response to environmental stimuli such as low temperature, these cells start to proliferate rapidly and differentiate into gametes. Whether the environmental stimulus serves directly as a signal triggering these cells to gamete differentiation or whether the cells are able to complete their differentiation program only under certain environmental conditions remains to be shown.

When cloning stem cells from male polyps of *H. magnipapillata* we found, to our surprise, clones producing both male gametes and clones producing female gametes (2). Clones from female polyps, by comparison, differentiated female gametes only. The observation of male and female gametes in male polyps raised the possibility that male stem cells could switch their sexual phenotype to female. To test this idea we recloned the stem cells from a male clone (7). After about 200 days in culture we found 5 out of 15 male polyps containing both male and female stem cells. Thus, stem cells from male polyps indeed occasionally switch the sexual phenotype. Stem cells from female polyps, by comparison, were found to be stable in their sexual differentiation capacity after recloning.

Two more features of hydra interstitial stem cells are of interest. First, the interstitial stem cells are not only the

precursors for germ cells but also themselves responsible for sex determination (8, 9). Somatic components (e.g., epithelial cells) do not play a role in determining the sexual phenotype. Second, male interstitial cells of hydra suppress the ability of female stem cells to differentiate eggs thereby causing «masculinization» of females. They, however, do not interfere with the ability of female stem cells to proliferate and produce somatic cells. The suppression of female gamete differentiation by male interstitial cells was demonstrated experimentally by introducing male stem cells into female tissue by grafting (10, 11). The observed inhibition of female differentiation by male cells also explains the failure of female stem cells in «male» polyps to differentiate. The molecular nature of this suppression is completely unknown. Since a few male interstitial cells are sufficient to masculinize female tissue (10), direct cell-cell interaction between male and female cells probably is not involved. It appears more likely that male stem cells produce a humoral suppressor molecule. Its molecular characterization promises interesting insights into how different cell populations communicate with each other in these ancient metazoa. Figure 1 summarizes these findings and illustrates our current view of the dif-

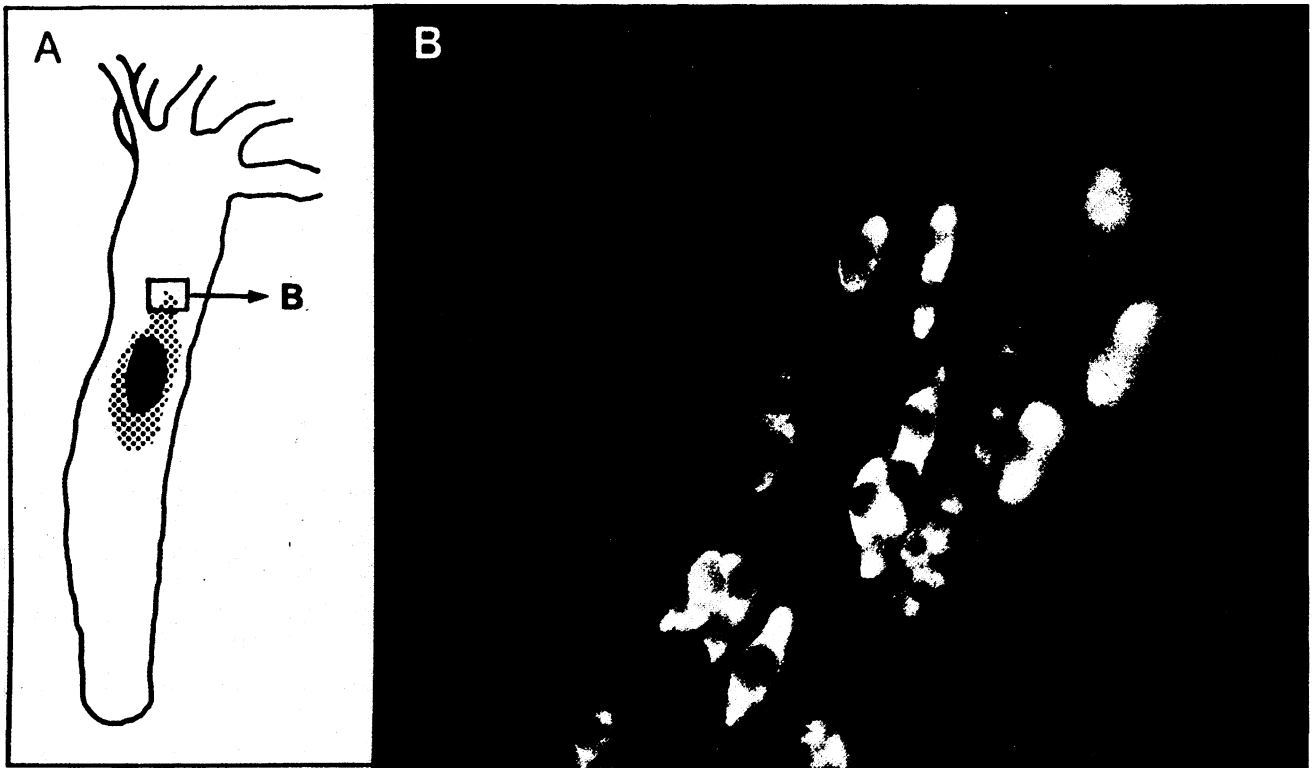


Figure 2. *In vivo* localization of interstitial stem cells of *Hydra magnipapillata* in epithelial host tissue. The interstitial cells were introduced by implantation of a small piece (about 300 epithelial cells) of donor tissue into epithelial host tissue. In this nerve free environment stem cells do not proliferate but differentiate into nerve cells and nematocytes (19). (A) Camera lucida drawing showing localization of donor tissue (black), presence of donor interstitial cells 48 hr after implantation (grey) and area depicted in B (square). (B) Visualization of donor interstitial cells by monoclonal antibody C41.

ferentiation and proliferation potential of hydra interstitial stem cells.

In vivo localization of interstitial stem cells

Interstitial stem cells in hydra are located primarily in the ectoderm throughout the gastric region (12). Although there have been numerous reports of interstitial cell migration in hydra (13, 14, 15), recent experiments with genetically marked interstitial cell clones indicated that stem cells grow as contiguous patches of cells (16). The finding of patches of clonally derived interstitial cells implies that the extent of migration of interstitial stem cells *in vivo* is limited. The earlier observation of migration in transplantation experiments could be explained by the finding that wounding, i.e. grafting itself, stimulates migration (17). In undisturbed tissue, however, interstitial stem cells appear not to crawl around extensively.

The growth of interstitial cells in clonal patches has important consequences for the distribution of stem cells to daughter polyps. For example, if in a male polyp (which contains male and female stem cells, see above) a clonal patch of female stem cells occurs close to the budding region, this bud will obtain only female cells and therefore become phenotypically female. Thus, due to the growth of

stem cells in clonal patches male polyps can occasionally give rise to female polyps, as is indeed observed experimentally (ref. in 7).

Role of the cellular environment in stem cell differentiation

Interstitial cells grow and differentiate in the interstices between ectodermal epithelial cells. In addition to epithelial cells, the interstitial space can have contact to the mesoglea, a thin acellular basement membrane which is separating endoderm from ectoderm. Thus, the major cellular components of the microenvironment in which interstitial stem cells grow and make their decisions are epithelial cells and cells of the interstitial cell lineage themselves, i.e. nerve cells and nematoblasts. The mesoglea may represent an important acellular component of the microenvironment. To study the role of the cellular environment in stem cell proliferation and differentiation, stem cells have been introduced into a variety of different host tissues by transplantation as illustrated in Figure 2. The results of a number of experiments have documented two environmental parameters as particularly important. The first parameter – nerve cell density in host tissue – positively influences proliferation. The second parameter – interstitial cell density – negatively influences proliferation.

Nerve cells present in the head were shown to stimulate stem cell proliferation (18). When stem cells were introduced into host tissue with progressively increased numbers of nerve cells the growth rate of interstitial cells was positively correlated to the nerve cell density (19). Hosts with low nerve cell density inhibit stem cell proliferation; hosts with normal high nerve cell densities support rapid stem cell proliferation.

The growth rate of stem cells is also negatively correlated to the level of interstitial cells present: growth of interstitial cells is faster in tissue with reduced interstitial cell numbers than in normal tissue (6, 20, 21, 22). This finding indicates that stem cell proliferation is controlled by a feed back signal from interstitial cells and their derivatives: decreasing the number of stem cells causes an increase in the self-renewal probability (P_s) and leads to recovery of normal stem cell levels (22). Conversely, increasing the number of stem cells decreases the self-renewal probability.

The nature of the signal(s) by which interstitial cells measure their density is unknown. There is evidence suggesting that the feedback signal is of short range (19, 22, 23). When tissue containing a low density of stem cells is grafted to tissue with high interstitial cell density, the stem cells at low density continue to proliferate rapidly and are not affected by the stem cells growing at high density. Whether the signal is a diffusible molecule produced by stem cells or whether density measurement is mediated directly by cell-cell contact has not yet been determined. Feedback regulation by stem cell density does not, however, occur after grafting tissue between genetically unrelated strains (24). Under these conditions the stem cells behave as if the genetically distinct cells are not present.

Factors influencing stem cell differentiation *in vivo*

The differentiation pattern of interstitial stem cells exhibits a strong dependence on position along the body axis. Interstitial stem cells are found throughout the gastric region; they are absent, however, in the head and foot region (12). Nematocyte differentiation occurs exclusively in the gastric region with stenoteles produced more proximally and desmonemes produced more distally (25). Thus, positional signals are involved in the decision for nerve and nematocyte differentiation. What molecules in the environment serve interstitial cells as positional cues in their decision making?

Much attention has concentrated on the role of the neuropeptide «head activator» (HA) in specifying positional information in hydra (27). The 11 amino acid peptide (Glu-Pro-Pro-Gly-Gly-Ser-Lys-Val-Ile-Leu-Phe; purified by Schaller and Bodenmüller, (28) is capable of causing nerve cell commitment in all parts of hydra tissue (29) in the concentration range of 0.1 - 10 pM. Up to 50% of stem cells differentiate to nerve cells under such conditions compared to 10% in control tissue (29). HA was found to stimulate nerve commitment if present during S phase (29, 30) implying that responses in target cells depend on their position in the cell cycle. After commitment nerve precursors are arrested in G2

and require a second signal to differentiate into mature neurons. This differentiation inducing signal can be released by wounding (31) and can be replaced by HA (32).

Do other neuropeptides in hydra also affect stem cell decisions? Neuropeptides with the carboxyterminus Arg-Phe-NH₂ (RFamide) are ubiquitous in coelenterates (for review see 33). Antisera raised against RFamide stain a population of immunoreactive sensory neurons around the mouth of hydra and a cluster of neurons in the peduncle (34). In ultrastructural studies RFamide like peptides were localized in dense-cored vesicles (35). They are thought to be released by exocytosis and act as hormones or neurotransmitters. In the marine hydrozoan *Hydractinia* the presence of RFamide⁺ neurons is correlated with the capacity to metamorphose (36) implying that RFamide may serve as a signal molecule during development. In an attempt to examine these neuropeptides for their influence on interstitial cell differentiation, we have analyzed on hydra the effect of Pol-RFamide I, a 7 amino acid peptide (Glu-Leu-Leu-Gly-Gly-Arg-Phe-NH₂) isolated from *Polyorchis* medusae (37). Treatment of *Hydra magnipapillata* polyps with 10⁻¹² M Pol-RFamide caused a twofold increase in the nerve cell density in isolated gastric tissue (Bosch, unpublished observation). Thus, at least two neuropeptides (head activator and Pol-RFamide) have been shown to affect interstitial stem cell behavior. Whether these neuropeptides directly affect stem cells or function indirectly, e.g., by stimulating the release of other biologically active peptide factors, remains to be shown.

Several more signal molecules stimulating or inhibiting the decisions of stem cells await their characterization. Their existence is evident from experiments with crude and partially purified extract. For example, Berking (38) demonstrated that hydra crude extract contains an inhibitor which causes neuronal precursor cells in S phase to remain precursors and prevents them from differentiating to nerve cells. Similarly, Fujisawa (39) found in crude extract an endogenous factor preventing precursor cells from differentiating into stenoteles.

Stem cell differentiation in hydra - molecular prospects

We have reviewed the progress which has been made in the last ten years in understanding the differentiation potential of interstitial stem cells in hydra. Now a new set of questions is raised concerning the molecular mechanisms underlying stem cell differentiation.

(1) What genes are involved in regulation of stem cell differentiation? Which cis-acting elements mediate position dependent differentiation within the body column? To approach these questions, several groups now are identifying hydra genes expressed in specific regions and genes expressed solely in certain pathways of somatic and germ line differentiation. Progress is also being made toward establishing a system for manipulating genes *in vivo* by introducing gene constructs into intact polyps *via* electroporation (Bosch, Bode, David and Steele, unpublished results). This will

enable identification of DNA sequences controlling cell type specific or region specific gene expression and genes involved in proliferation control. In addition, a gene transfer system will allow introduction of markers into stem cells and thus permit a rigorous *in vivo* examination of the stem cell lineage outlined in Figure 1.

(2) The neuropeptides HA and RFamide apparently affect stem cell behavior. How do they do so? Which cell populations are the target cells? Which genes are activated? Using subtractive hybridization it should be feasible to isolate cDNAs for mRNAs made in response to such factor treatment. Equally important for understanding the *in vivo* function of these signal molecules will be the characterization of the receptors for the particular ligands. Evidence for two types of receptors for HA was presented recently by C. Schaller's group (40) and it was proposed that different functions of the HA molecule are mediated by different receptor types.

(3) «Stem cell systems in hydra and vertebrates strongly suggest the importance of spatial organization and thus extrinsic influences» (41). Can we define these extrinsic influences in molecular terms? What components of the environment (signal molecules, neuropeptides, growth factors) are involved in the decision making of stem cells? The search for such molecules would clearly be facilitated if signal molecules known to play crucial roles in regulation of differentiation and development in higher organisms are also used in hydra. It is thus encouraging that the first membrane associated protein tyrosine kinases and receptors cloned from hydra have been found highly homologous to vertebrate genes (42, 43, Steele, pers. commun.).

(4) There is a growing realization of the importance of the extracellular matrix in cell differentiation and morphogenesis (44). Strong links are emerging between growth factors and the ability of cell adhesion molecules and extracellular matrix molecules to participate in, and potentially regulate, morphogenesis and differentiation (45). It is tempting to speculate, therefore, that in hydra the mesoglea serves as an affinity matrix presenting growth and differentiation factors along the body axis. By specific release of these factors the mesoglea could specify positional information used in the spatial regulation of differentiation (46).

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