Inflammatory Processes. Molecular Mechanisms and Therapeutic Opportunities. **Edited by L. Gordon Letts and Douglas W. Morgan. Birkhauser, Basel-Boston-Berlin, 2000**

These days direct accesses to many journals offer an enormous possibility to find new information. Electronic contact is **so** easy that many scientific discussions go on without seeing each other. Some people predict that in near future many of presently organised symposia and congresses will be replaced by network meetings attended by thousands of people sitting in their offices or at home looking at monitors and joining discussion after double click of their mouse. Yet, fortunately for us, many meetings are still going on, and thanks to new technology we may apply to attend them by computer. Of special interest are small well-focused conferences that bring together specialists who work in the same or closely related fields. Those invited to such meetings are usually experts and also most of those who attend are specialists. This creates stimulating and demanding environment for exchanging ideas and offers a unique possibility for less experienced to sort solid data from the vast rest.

The book "Inflammatory Processes. Molecular Mechanisms and Therapeutic Opportunities" from well know series "Progress in Inflammation Research" encompasses some of the highlights of contributions presented in November 1998 at Hershey, Pennsylvania during 9th International Conference of the Inflammation Research Association. The aim of the Conference was to update recent developments in the inflammation research and in particular new drug discovery and their use in modulation of inflammatory reactions. Although no new strategy to control inflammatory response was proposed at the Conference several aspects were covered in expert way, giving an opportunity for less advanced in the field to get a solid and well-chosen information. Furthermore, since book was printed in year 2000 some contributors took a chance to update their references. Four contributions cover chemokines including update of eotaxin and more precisely their involvement in allergic inflammation of the airways and involvement during evolution of fibrotic disease. The chapter on the role of MCP-1 in diseases is also comprehensive and well written. The signal transduction and regulation of diverse mediators such as the JNK group of MAP kinases, as well as regulators of AP-1 and of NF-κB are discussed in three chapters which include data and speculations regarding possible targets for intervention with drugs. Other topic of major contributions includes macrophage metalloproteinases, enzymes that gain recently more and more attention. Finally, well-composed information regarding cellular targets of the immunosuppressive drug rapamycin is provided. The book contain also short summaries of workshops and poster discussions which covered a broad range of topics from signal transduction and regulation of gene expression, mediators of inflammation, cell adhesion and leukocyte trafficking, to skin inflammation, angiogenesis and wound repair. In summary, although the book will not be of much use for experts in the field it should be of interest to all basic research scientists who seek well sorted basic information provided by experts.

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Vitamin A and Retinoids: An Update of Biological Aspects and Clinical Applications. **Edited by M.A. Livrea**

Both scientists and clinicians often ask if there is a concise review on vitamin A and retinoids that they could read, and this would fit the bill well. The new book of the MCBU (Molecular and Cell Biology Updates) series, entitled: "Vitamin A and Retinoids: An Update of Biological Aspects and Clinical Applications", edited by M.A. Livrea, presents current knowledge and state-of the-art-data on basic and clinical research in this field.

The volume consists of 23 chapters (300 pages) written by the well known authors, the experts in various fields of research on vitamin A and

retinoids. The chapters could be grouped into three parts dealing with: i) biochemistry, metabolism, pharmacokinetics of vitamin A and modulation of nuclear receptor signalling, ii) the role of vitamin A in physiological processes such as visual transduction, immune responses, hematopoiesis, and 3) potential application of retinoids in clinical medicine for treatment of malignancies and other disorders (e.g. skin diseases, including aging and conditions associated with derangement of proliferation and differentiation).

The chapter on vitamin A, retinoids and immunity points to an important role of these compounds as biological modifiers of both humoral and cellular immune reactions. In addition to well known data on mechanism of retinoid action *via* nuclear receptors, there are some more recent informations on extra-nuclear (not mediated by nuclear receptors) effects of retinoids. Also the concept of inverse agonism or negative agonism is described which is based on observations that certain antagonists of G-coupled membrane receptors are capable of eliciting an inhibitory effect upon unliganded basal receptor activity. Of special interest for both biologists and clinicians seem to be chapters covering the issue of synergistic effects of retinoids and other biological response modifiers such as vitamin D derivatives, cytokines and growth factors. The molecular data explaining mechanism of such synergistic effects are provided and critically discussed, stressing that interrelationships between retinoids and vitamin D, from receptor heterodimers to biological effects, are still far from being elucidated.

Although not completely understood, combinations of retinoids and vitamin D3 derivatives or interferons found clinical application in the treatment of cutaneous premalignant and early malignant lesions, cervical carcinoma (as an adjuvant therapy) and some neoplastic disorders of hematopoietic system.

The future of research on retinoids and their application in the clinical practice seems to be dependent on selectivity of these compounds based on receptor binding affinity which should allow diminishing side effects and improve clinical efficacy.

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