

Handbook of Neurochemistry and Molecular Neurobiology

Neural Signaling Mechanisms

Abel Lajtha (Ed.)

Handbook of Neurochemistry and Molecular Neurobiology Neural Signaling Mechanisms

Volume Editor: Katsuhiko Mikoshiba

With 130 Figures and 14 Tables

 Springer

Editor

Abel Lajtha
Director
Center for Neurochemistry
Nathan S. Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research
140 Old Orangeburg Road
Orangeburg
New York, 10962
USA

Volume Editor

Katsuhiko Mikoshiba
Group Director of Neuro-Developmental Disorder Research Group
RIKEN Brain Science Institute
2-1 Hirosawa Wako-shi
Saitama 351-0198
Japan
mikosiba@brain.riken.jp

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Preface

The brain is an organ with a complex structure and is composed of various types of cells. It is mainly composed of neurons and glia cells, and a higher brain function results from the formation of complex neuronal networks. What is the best way to understand the brain? One way is by understanding how molecular and cellular mechanisms are formed. Among them, it is important to know the molecular mechanisms by which neuronal networks are developed, a process initiated during early cell-cell interactions. In addition, it is essential to understand the mechanism of signal transduction inside the cells during network formation at various developmental stages and also in the mature brain. The functions of the brain are multiple and complex – it is a centrally regulating organizing system of multiple simultaneous functions. As we begin to understand it, we recognize the specific functions and specific role individual cells have to perform, and the interactions of the cells that are needed for such functions. The understanding of these cell to cell interactions, which involve intracellular changes, is essential for understanding the multiple role of the brain, and also for understanding any change responsible for malfunction of this organ.

This volume of the Handbook of Neurochemistry and Molecular Neurobiology is a collection of chapters that describe the “Neural Signaling Mechanism” of the brain. The first chapters briefly cover the molecular mechanisms occurring during the development of the nervous system: genesis, migration and differentiation of neurons and neuronal positioning, cell fate determination involved in the regulation of axonal formation, and neural process formation. Subsequently, the signaling mechanism in synaptic transmission is described; a key process of neural function is the way neurons influence one another through synaptic contacts.

There are many regulatory and signaling mechanisms inside the cells. Phosphorylation is one important mechanism that has already been studied successfully for some time, but recently the importance of phospholipid signaling has also been noted. This volume includes discussions of recent studies in phospholipid signaling and its role in cell function: metabolism, function, and delivery of inositol polyphosphates, and their role as regulators of nuclear function.

Various receptors located on synaptic plasma membranes are important places to communicate information from outside the plasma membrane to the cells inside. Recently it was found that a receptor dynamically moves inside the cell and moves to the plasma membrane; the density of the receptor at synapses is closely modulated. How receptors are targeted, and how their structure and sorting, insertion, clustering, and internalization may be regulated, indicate important regulatory mechanisms involved in receptor signaling and function. These interactions are discussed in this volume.

The importance of Ca^{2+} ions is established and it is widely known that Ca^{2+} can act as a global messenger inside and outside cells, to alter a variety of intracellular functions. Many molecules involving receptors and channels are reported to be associated with Ca^{2+} signaling. These molecular mechanisms are closely correlated with morphological changes and functions, and cell fate changes in the brain, which are also well described in this volume.

Life system studies have advanced in a rapidly expanding fashion, yielding exciting and important information and pointing out the need for further studies. We know that each cell in each organ has unique function(s), although their basic cellular mechanisms may be common. Therefore, it is important to know how unique the signaling mechanism in the brain is, in addition to the common basic mechanisms, compared with other organs. There exist multiple specific cerebral mechanisms. This volume covers relatively wide perspectives of these topics; therefore, it will help the readers to put together the descriptions it contains, and to integrate them as a means to understand the system(s) of the brain as a whole.

In this volume, one can successfully learn about important signaling mechanisms in the brain at various levels, although there are other important signaling areas that it was not possible to cover in the present volume.

I would like to express my appreciation to the authors for their outstanding contribution for this most important volume titled “Neural Signaling Mechanisms.” Finally, I would like to express my appreciation for the series editor, Abel Lajtha, and the managing secretary, Kristine Immediato, and the publisher for their encouragement and patience in publishing this volume.

Katsuhiko Mikoshiba

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Contributors

Nariko Arimura

Department of Cell Pharmacology,
Graduate School of Medicine,
Nagoya University, 65 Tsurumai,
Showa-ku, Nagoya, Aichi 466-8550, Japan

Michael L. J. Ashford

Neurosciences Institute,
Division of Pathology and Neuroscience,
Ninewells Hospital and Medical School,
University of Dundee, Dundee, UK

Heinrich Betz

Max-Planck-Institute for Brain Research
Department of Neurochemistry
Deutschordenstrasse 46
60528 Frankfurt am Main, Germany
Email: neurochemie@mpih-frankfurt.mpg.de

Ernesto Carafoli

Venetian Institute of Molecular Medicine,
Department of Biochemistry,
University of Padova,
Viale Colombo 3,
35121, Padova, Italy
Email: ernesto.carafoli@unipd.it

Donald C. Chang

Department of Biology
Hong Kong University of Science and Technology
Clear Water Bay, Kowloon,
Hong Kong, China
Email: bochang@ust.hk

Leon G. D'Cruz

Wales Heart Research Institute,
Department of Medicine-Cardiology,
Cardiff University School of Medicine,
Cardiff CF14 4XN, UK
Email: DCruzLG@cf.ac.uk and LaiT@cf.ac.uk

Dieter D'hoedt

Laboratorium voor Fysiologie, Campus Gasthuisberg,
Herestraat 49, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium

Nils Damann

Laboratorium voor Fysiologie, Campus Gasthuisberg,
Herestraat 49, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium

C. Peter Downes

Division of Molecular Physiology,
College of Life Sciences, University of Dundee,
Dundee, DD1 4EH, UK
Email: c.p.downes@dundee.ac.uk

Sébastien Dutertre

Department of Neurochemistry,
Max-Planck-Institute for Brain Research,
Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Britta J. Eickholt

MRC Centre for Developmental Neurobiology,
King's College London, Guy's Campus,
London, SE1 1UL, UK

Hao Fei

Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences,
Gonda Neuroscience and Genetics Research Center,
Room 3357C, David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA,
695 Charles Young Drive South, Los Angeles,
California 90095-1761, USA

Yoshinori Fujiyoshi

Dept. of Biophysics, Faculty of Science, Kyoto Univ.,
Kyoto, Japan

Kohji Fukunaga

Department of Pharmacology
Tohoku University Graduate
School of Pharmaceutical Sciences
Sendai 980-8578, Japan
E-mail: fukunaga@mail.pharm.tohoku.ac.jp

Jody Groenendyk

Department of Biochemistry,
University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta,
Canada T6G, 2H7

Jing Guo

Department of Biology, Hong Kong University of
Science and Technology
Clear Water Bay, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Tatsuya Haga

Institute for Biomolecular Science, Gakushuin
University, 1-5-1 Mejiro, Toshima-ku,
Tokyo 171-8588, Japan

Mitsuhiro Hashimoto

Hashimoto Research Unit
RIKEN Brain Science Institute
2-1 Hirosawa, Wako-shi
Saitama 351-0198, Japan
Email: mhashimoto@brain.riken.jp

Claus W. Heizmann

Division of Clinical Chemistry and Biochemistry,
Department of Pediatrics,
University of Zurich, Steinwiesstrasse 75,
8032 Zurich, Switzerland
Email: Claus.Heizmann@kispi.unizh.ch

Chihiro Hisatsune

Laboratory for Developmental Neurobiology,
RIKEN, Brain Science Institute, 2-1 Hirosawa, Wako,
Saitama, 351-0198, Japan

Susumu Ichiyama

Institute for Biomolecular Science,
Gakushuin University, 1-5-1 Mejiro,
Toshima-ku, Tokyo 171-8588, Japan
Email: susumu.ichiyama@gakushuin.ac.jp

Michihiro Igarashi

Divisions of Molecular and Cellular Biology and
Trans-disciplinary Research Programs,
Niigata University, 1-757 Asahi-machi,
Chuo-ku, Niigata,
Niigata 951-8510, Japan
Email: tarokaja@med.niigata-u.ac.jp

Keiji Imoto

Department of Information Physiology,
National Institute for Physiological Sciences,
and School of Life Science, the Graduate University
for Advanced Studies (SOKENDAI),
Okazaki 444-8787, Japan
Email: keiji@nips.ac.jp

Naoyuki Inagaki

Laboratory of Signal Transduction, Nara Institute of
Science and Technology

Kazuhide Inoue

Department of Molecular and System Pharmacology
Graduate School of Pharmaceutical Sciences,
Kyushu University
3-1-1 Maidashi, Higashi, Fukuoka 812-8582, Japan
Email: inoue@phar.kyushu-u.ac.jp

Kozo Kaibuchi

Department of Cell Pharmacology,
Graduate School of Medicine,
Nagoya University, 65 Tsurumai, Showa-ku,
Nagoya, Aichi 466-8550, Japan
Email: kaibuchi@med.nagoya-u.ac.jp

Hiroyuki Kamiguchi

Laboratory for Neuronal Growth Mechanisms
RIKEN Brain Science Institute
2-1 Hirosawa, Wako, Saitama 351-0198, Japan
Email: kamiguchi@brain.riken.jp

Masanobu Kano

Department of Cellular Neuroscience
Graduate School of Medicine, Osaka University
2-2 Yamadaoka,
Suita, Osaka 565-0871, Japan
Email: mkano@cns.med.osaka-u.ac.jp

David E. Krantz

Department of Psychiatry and Biobehavioral Sciences
Gonda Neuroscience and Genetics Research Center,
Room 3357C
David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA
695 Charles Young Drive South
Los Angeles, California 90095-1761, USA
Email: dkrantz@ucla.edu

Yoshihiro Kubo

Division of Biophysics and Neurobiology,
Department of Molecular Physiology,
National Institute for Physiological Sciences and
Department of Physiological Science,
School of Life Science, The Graduate University for
Advanced Studies, Nishigoh-naka 38, Myodaiji,
Okazaki, Aichi 444-8585, Japan
Solution Oriented Research for Science and Technology,
Japan Science and Technology Agency, Kawaguchi,
Saitama 332-0012, Japan
COE Program for Brain Integration and its Disorders,
Tokyo Medical and Dental University,
Graduate School and Faculty of Medicine,
Bunkyo, Tokyo 113-8519, Japan
Email: ykubo@nips.ac.jp

Dmitry Kuzmin

Shemyakin-Ovchinnikov Institute of Bioorganic
Chemistry, Russian Academy of Sciences,
Moscow, Russia

F. Anthony Lai

Wales Heart Research Institute, Department of
Medicine-Cardiology, Cardiff University School of
Medicine, Cardiff CF14 4XN, UK

Yuanzhi Lao

Department of Biology, Hong Kong University of
Science and Technology
Clear Water Bay, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Bodo Laube

Department of Neurochemistry,
Max-Planck-Institute for Brain Research,
Frankfurt am Main, Germany

Catherine Leclerc

Centre de Biologie du Développement, UMR 5547 &
GDR 2688, Université Paul Sabatier, 118 route de
Narbonne, 31062 Toulouse, France

Estelle Leclerc

Division of Clinical Chemistry and Biochemistry,
Department of Pediatrics,
University of Zurich, Steinwiesstrasse 75,
8032 Zurich, Switzerland

Nick R. Leslie

Division of Molecular Physiology,
College of Life Sciences, University of Dundee,
Dundee, DD1 4EH, UK

Dmitry Lim

Venetian Institute of Molecular Medicine,
Department of Biochemistry,
University of Padova, Viale Colombo 3,
35121, Padova, Italy

Nobuaki Maeda

Department of Developmental
Neuroscience, Tokyo Metropolitan
Institute for Neuroscience,
2-6 Musashidai, Fuchu, Tokyo 183-8526, Japan
Email: maeda-nb@igakuken.or.jp

Marek Michalak

Department of Biochemistry,
University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta,
Canada T6G 2H7
Email: Marek.Michalak@ualberta.ca

Katsuhiko Mikoshiba

Laboratory for Developmental Neurobiology,
RIKEN, Brain Science Institute, 2-1 Hirosawa,
Wako-shi, Saitama, 351-0198, Japan
Calcium Oscillation Project, SORST,
Japan Science and Technology Agency,
2-1 Hirosawa, Wako-shi,
Saitama, 351-0198, Japan
Email: mikosiba@brain.riken.jp

Andrew L. Miller

Department of Biology,
The Hong Kong University of Science & Technology,
Clear Water Bay, Kowloon,
Hong Kong SAR, PRC

Eishichi Miyamoto

Emeritus Professor, Kumamoto University,
Kumamoto 860-8556, Japan

Marc Moreau

Centre de Biologie du Développement,
UMR 5547 & GDR 2688, Université Paul Sabatier,
118 route de Narbonne, 31062 Toulouse, France
Email: moreau@cict.fr

Tatsuya Mori

Laboratory for Neuronal Growth Mechanisms,
RIKEN Brain Science Institute, 2-1 Hirosawa, Wako,
Saitama 351-0198, Japan

Isabelle Néant

Centre de Biologie du Développement,
UMR 5547 & GDR 2688,
Université Paul Sabatier,
118 route de Narbonne, 31062 Toulouse, France

Bernd Nilius

KU Leuven,
Department Mol Cell Biology
Laboratory Ion Channel Research
Campus Gasthuisberg,
O&N 1, Herestraat 49-Bus 802
B-3000 Leuven, Belgium
Email: bernd.nilius@med.kuleuven.be

Yoshinori Nozawa

Department of Oxidative Stress Research
Gifu International Institute of Biotechnology
Email: ynozawa@giib.or.jp

Kentaro Ohko

Divisions of Molecular and Cellular Biology,
and Dermatology, Graduate School of Medical and
Dental Sciences, and Trans-disciplinary Research
Programs, Niigata University, 1-757 Asahi-machi,
Chuo-ku, Niigata, Niigata 951-8510, Japan

Toshio Ohshima

Laboratory for Molecular Brain Science,
Department of Life Science and Medical Bio-Science,
Waseda University, Sinjuku-ku 169-8555, Japan
Email: ohshima@waseda.jp

Yasushi Okamura

Department of Integrative Physiology,
Graduate School of Medicine,
Osaka University, Yamadaoka 2-2,
Suita, Osaka, 565-0871, Japan
Email: yokamura@phys2.med.osaka-u.ac.jp

Sei Sasaki

Department of Nephrology,
Graduate School of Medicine,
Tokyo Medical and Dental University 1-5-45 Yushima
Bunkyo Tokyo, Japan

Stephen B. Shears

Inositide Signaling Group
National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences,
NIH, DHHS, Research Triangle Park, PO Box 12233,
NC 27709, USA
Email: shears@niehs.nih.gov

Norifumi Shioda

Department of Pharmacology, Tohoku University
Graduate, School of Pharmaceutical Sciences,
Sendai 980-8578, Japan

Emmanuel Sturchler

Division of Clinical Chemistry and Biochemistry,
Department of Pediatrics,
University of Zurich, Steinwiesstrasse 75,
8032 Zurich, Switzerland

Toshihide Tabata

Department of Cellular Neuroscience,
Graduate School of Medicine, Osaka University,
2-2 Yamadaoka, Suita, Osaka 565-0871, Japan

Michihiro Tateyama

Division of Biophysics and Neurobiology,
Department of Molecular Physiology,
National Institute for Physiological Sciences,
and Department of Physiological Science,
School of Life Science, The Graduate University for
Advanced Studies, Nishigoh-naka 38,
Myodaiji, Okazaki,
Aichi 444-8585, Japan
Solution Oriented Research for Science and Technology,
Japan Science and Technology Agency,
Kawaguchi, Saitama 332-0012, Japan

Susumu Tomita

Departments of Cellular and Molecular Physiology
Program in Cellular Neuroscience,
Neurodegeneration and Repair
Yale University School of Medicine
New Haven, CT 06520-8026
Email: Susumu.Tomita@yale.edu

Kazushige Touhara

Department of Integrated Biosciences, Rm201
The University of Tokyo, 5-1-5 Kashiwanoha, Kashiwa,
Chiba 277-8562, Japan
Email: touhara@k.u-tokyo.ac.jp

Shinichi Uchida

Department of Nephrology,
Graduate School of Medicine,
Tokyo Medical and Dental University 1-5-45 Yushima
Bunkyo Tokyo, Japan
Email: suchida.kid@tmd.ac.jp

Minoru Wakamori

Department of Oral Biology, Graduate School of Dentistry, Tohoku University, Sendai 980-8575, Japan

Sarah E. Webb

Department of Biology, The Hong Kong University of Science & Technology, Clear Water Bay, Kowloon, Hong Kong SAR, PRC

Alan J. Williams

Wales Heart Research Institute, Department of Medicine-Cardiology, Cardiff University School of Medicine, Cardiff CF14 4XN, UK

Hitoshi Yagisawa

Graduate School of Life Science, University of Hyogo, Harima Science Garden City, Hyogo 678-1297, Japan
Email: yagisawa@sci.u-hyogo.ac.jp

Haruka Yamazaki

Calcium Oscillation Project, SORST, Japan Science and Technology Agency, 2-1 Hirosawa, Wako-shi, Saitama 351-0198, Japan
Laboratory for Developmental Neurobiology, RIKEN, Brain Science Institute, 2-1 Hirosawa, Wako-shi, Saitama, 351-0198, Japan

Masato Yasui

Department of Pharmacology, School of Medicine Keio University, Tokyo 160-8582, Japan
Email: myasui@sc.itc.keio.ac.jp

Chang C. Yin

Department of Biophysics, Health Science Centre & Centre for Protein Science, Peking University, Beijing 100083, China

Takeshi Yoshimura

Department of Molecular Biology, Graduate School of Science, Institute for Advanced Research, Nagoya University, Furou-chou, Chikusa-ku, Nagoya, Aichi 464-8602, Japan
Department of Cell Pharmacology, Graduate School of Medicine, Nagoya University, 65 Tsurumai, Showa-ku, Nagoya, Aichi 466-8550, Japan

Michisuke Yuzaki

Department of Physiology
School of Medicine, Keio University
35 Shinano-machi, Shinjuku-ku
Tokyo 160-8582, Japan
Email: myuzaki@a5.keio.jp