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Adeno-Associated Virus

Methods and Protocols

Edited by

Richard O. Snyder

University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA

Philippe Moullier

Unité INSERM 649, Nantes, France

Editors

Richard O. Snyder
University of Florida
Department of Molecular Genetics
and Microbiology
1600 SW Archer Road
Gainesville, FL 32610
USA
rsnyder@cerhb.ufl.edu

Philippe Moullier
CHU Hôtel Dieu
INSERM U649
Labo. Thérapie Génique
bd. Jean Monnet 30
44035 Nantes CX 1
Bâtiment Jean Monnet
France
moullier@ufl.edu

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Preface

From a drug development perspective, gene transfer technology is relatively new and evolving at a rapid pace. Recombinant adeno-associated viral (rAAV) vectors have become more widely investigated and improved in their short history [1, 2]. Although wild-type AAV was studied for decades, the work of Xiao Xiao and R. Jude Samulski published in 1996 represents the first evidence that rAAV can be directly administered in situ resulting in efficient, remarkably tolerated, and long-term gene transfer in the mouse skeletal muscle following a single injection [3]. That year was also the year of the lentivirus vector capable of transducing resting neurons after intracerebral injection in the murine model [4]. Yet, 1996 was only 1 year after the Orkin and Motulsky report [5] emphasizing the need for better vectors. Today, progress in rAAV-mediated gene transfer is so robust that long-term, efficient, and regulatable transgene expression is reproducibly achieved in large animal models. For example, (1) the entire limb of hemophilia dogs and primates can be efficiently transduced resulting in long-term phenotypic correction [6, 7] and very recently in hemophilia B patients [8]; (2) rAAV administered once in nonhuman primate muscle shows sustained regulatable transgene expression for more than 5 years [9, 10]. Simultaneously, the discovery of new AAV serotypes [11] along with the ability to encapsidate either “self-complementing” or “single-stranded” vector DNA [12] has turned this vector system into an extremely powerful and versatile tool with preferential organ transduction patterns depending on the AAV capsid origin and/or the vector DNA used. Finally, considerable improvements have been made in the availability of clinical grade rAAV stocks [13] a critical issue, even though large-scale production remains problematic despite the existence of potentially powerful new biotechnological approaches (hybrid viruses such as herpes, baculovirus, and stable packaging cell lines). rAAV vectors and their use in gene transfer are multidisciplinary syntheses requiring the expertise of virologists, physical chemists, chemical engineers, geneticists, epigeneticists, physiologists, and immunologists as well as veterinarians, pharmacists, regulatory affairs specialists, manufacturers, analytical scientists, and medical doctors. The complexity of gene transfer agents in the context of their clinical use requires investigators to have an – or at least an appreciation of – the regulatory environment and constraints that affect vector design, manufacturing, preclinical testing, and clinical use, with an emphasis on patient protection. In this volume, we have invited experts in the field from the USA and Europe to contribute current knowledge from this multidimensional field relating to the biology of AAV, rAAV vector design, vector manufacturing and product testing, performance of rAAV vectors in major organs, rAAV-related immunological issues, design of animal and clinical studies, and clinical experience.

*Gainesville, FL, USA
Nantes, France*

*Richard O. Snyder
Philippe Moullier*

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Contributors

- OUMEYA ADJALI • *Laboratoire de Thérapie Génique, INSERM UMR649, Université de Nantes, Nantes, France*
- MAVIS AGBANDJE-McKENNA • *Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA*
- IGNACIO ANEGON • *INSERM, Nantes, France*
- VALDER R. ARRUDA • *University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA, USA*
- PATRICK AUBOURG • *UMR Inserm U745, Faculty of Pharmaceutical and Biological Sciences, University Paris Descartes-Sorbonne-Paris Cité, Paris, France*
- MURIEL AUDIT • *GenoSafe SAS, EVRY Cedex, France*
- JEFFREY S. BARTLETT • *Gene Therapy Center, The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus, OH, USA; Department of Pediatrics, and Department of Molecular Virology, Immunology, and Medical Genetics, The Ohio State University Columbus, Columbus, OH, USA*
- RAFFI BEKEREDJIAN • *Internal Medicine, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany*
- MAHAJOUR BELLO-ROUFAI • *Center of Excellence for Regenerative Health Biotechnology, University of Florida, Alachua, FL, USA*
- JEAN BENNETT • *Department of Ophthalmology, F.M. Kirby Center for Molecular Ophthalmology, Scheie Eye Institute, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA*
- LAWRENCE T. BISH • *Department of Physiology, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Philadelphia, PA, USA*
- VÉRONIQUE BLOUIN • *Laboratoire de Thérapie Génique, INSERM, Université de Nantes, Nantes, France*
- OLIVIER BOCKSTAEEL • *Hôpital Erasme, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium*
- CHELSEA M. BOLYARD • *Gene Therapy Center, The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus, OH, USA; Integrated Biomedical Sciences Graduate Program, School of Medicine, The Ohio State University, Columbus, OH, USA*
- NICOLE BRUMENT • *INSERM UMR649, Institut de Recherche Thérapeutique - IRTI, Université de Nantes, Nantes, Cedex 01, France*
- HILDEGARD BÜNING • *Department of Internal Medicine, University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany; Center for Molecular Medicine Cologne (ZMMK), University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany*
- K. REED CLARK • *Center for Gene Therapy, The Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital, Columbus, OH, USA*
- THOMAS J. CONLON • *Department of Pediatrics, University of Florida Powell Gene Therapy Center, Gainesville, FL, USA*
- THERESE CRONIN • *Scheie Eye Institute, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, USA*

- OLIVIER DANOS • *INSERM U781, Hôpital Necker Enfants Malades and Université Paris Descartes, Paris, France; University College London Cancer Institute, London, UK*
- J. GEORGE DICKSON • *School of Biological Sciences, Royal Holloway – University of London, London, UK*
- TERENCE R. FLOTTE • *Department of Pediatrics, University of Massachusetts Medical School Gene Therapy Center, Worcester, MA, USA*
- KEVIN D. FOUST • *The Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Columbus, OH, USA*
- JOYCE D. FRANCIS • *Center of Excellence for Regenerative Health Biotechnology, University of Florida, Alachua, FL, USA*
- ACHILLE FRANCOIS • *Laboratoire de Thérapie Génique, INSERM, Université de Nantes, Nantes, France*
- GUANGPING GAO • *Gene Therapy Center, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA, USA*
- JOHN T. GRAY • *Department of Hematology, St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital, Memphis, TN, USA*
- Michael Hallek • *Department of Internal Medicine, University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany; Center for Molecular Medicine Cologne (ZMMK), University of Cologne, Cologne, Germany*
- ROLAND W. HERZOG • *Division of Cellular and Molecular Therapy, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA*
- KATHERINE A. HIGH • *Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Philadelphia, PA, USA; The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA, USA*
- BRIAN KASPAR • *The Research Institute at Nationwide Children’s Hospital, Columbus, OH, USA*
- JÜRGEN KLEINSCHMIDT • *German Cancer Research Center, Heidelberg, Germany*
- TAEYOUNG KOO • *School of Biological Sciences, Royal Holloway – University of London, London, UK*
- CAROLINE LE GUINER • *INSERM UMR 649/GENETHON, Nantes, France*
- JUAN LI • *Division of Molecular Pharmaceutics, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA*
- R. MICHAEL LINDEN • *King’s College London School of Medicine, London, UK*
- ASHLEY T. MARTINO • *Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, St. John’s University, Queens, NY, USA*
- DANIEL G. MILLER • *Department of Pediatrics, University of Washington, Seattle, WA, USA*
- PHILLIPE MOULLIER • *INSERM UMR 649/GENETHON/Molecular Genetics & Microbiology Department, University of Florida, Nantes, Cedex 01, France*
- CHRISTIAN MUELLER • *Department of Pediatrics, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA, USA*
- OLIVER J. MÜLLER • *Internal Medicine, University of Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany*
- MAGALIE PENAUD-BUDLOO • *INSERM UMR649, Institut de Recherche Thérapeutique, Université de Nantes, Nantes, France*

- CHUNPING QIAO • *Division of Molecular Pharmaceutics, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA*
- FABIENNE ROLLING • *Laboratoire de Thérapie Génique, INSERM UMR649, Université de Nantes, Nantes, France*
- MARK S. SANDS • *Washington University School of Medicine, St. Louis, MO, USA*
- RICHARD O. SNYDER • *Department of Molecular Genetics and Microbiology, University of Florida College of Medicine, Gainesville, FL, USA; Center of Excellence for Regenerative Health Biotechnology, University of Florida, Alachua, FL, USA*
- KNUT STIEGER • *Department of Ophthalmology, Justus-Liebig-University Giessen, Giessen, Germany*
- H. LEE SWEENEY • *Department of Physiology, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine, Philadelphia, PA, USA*
- LILIANE TENENBAUM • *Hôpital Erasme, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Brussels, Belgium; Lausanne Hospital University, Lausanne, Switzerland*
- LIJUN WANG • *Center of Excellence for Regenerative Health Biotechnology, University of Florida, Alachua, FL, USA*
- MATTHEW D. WEITZMAN • *Salk Institute, La Jolla, CA, USA*
- XIAO XIAO • *Division of Molecular Pharmaceutics, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, USA*
- LI ZHONG • *Gene Therapy Center, University of Massachusetts Medical School, Worcester, MA, USA*
- SERGE ZOLOTUKHIN • *Division of Cellular and Molecular Therapy, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, USA*

