

Progress in Hormone Biochemistry and Pharmacology

Volume 1

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Editorial

Endocrinology is a scientific discovery of the 20th century. Progress in the understanding of hormone actions at the biochemical level, and the development of this knowledge into pharmaceutical products for use in human and veterinary medicine, has grown at an exponential rate in recent years. It is hard to believe that the chemical nature of the steroid hormones was unknown until the 1930's, that metabolic conversion of vitamin D to circulating hormones was only discovered in 1966, that the very existence of human prolactin was debated up to 10 years ago, and that the hypothalamic releasing hormones were identified and purified less than 20 years ago. The discovery of potent locally-acting substances of short biological half-life, such as cyclic-AMP, prostaglandins, and thromboxanes has added a new dimension to endocrinology. Textbooks more than five years old are not just out of date: they are frankly misleading.

Almost every discovery in endocrine biochemistry has led to new pharmaceutical products, many of which have revolutionised our lives. Obvious examples are insulin for diabetics, corticosteroids for numerous inflammatory diseases, sex hormones for contraception, prostaglandins for the termination of pregnancy, and β -blocking drugs for the treatment of hypertension. There is presently intense activity with releasing hormones, which may offer a safer approach to fertility control in both men and women.

It is with this background that the idea of a series of review publications was born. The Editors' intention is to identify workers in rapidly developing areas of endocrine biochemistry or pharmacology and to invite them to prepare a definitive presentation of their field. By using camera-ready manuscripts, the volume will be produced and released in three to four months. Initially, it is hoped to produce a volume of five or six reviews every two years. No attempt will be made to cover all areas of endocrinology, just those where progress is occurring at a rapid rate.

The Editors would be interested to receive suggestions of possible topics to be covered in future volumes.

M.H.B.
A.C.

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