

**PROTIDES
OF THE
BIOLOGICAL FLUIDS
1959**

Edited by
H. PEETERS

PROTIDES OF THE BIOLOGICAL FLUIDS

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SEVENTH COLLOQUIUM
BRUGES 1959

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H. PEETERS

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PREFACE

The annual Bruges Colloquia show that the study of the problems related to the structure and metabolism of proteins is each year becoming increasingly extensive and in this report of the Seventh Colloquium a wide range of topics has been covered. An attempt has been made to arrange the many papers in a logical order.

In the introductory paper "The Synthesis of Antibodies and of Proteins" a comprehensive picture of the subject is drawn by Professor SCHULTZE of Marburg/Lahn, whose contributions to protein chemistry as well as to the Colloquium are so important.

The next eleven papers deal with technical subjects. They stress the great importance that the Colloquium has for seven consecutive years attached to technical developments connected with the analytical study of protein mixtures. Immuno-electrophoresis, which appeared on the programme for the first time at the Second Colloquium in 1954, when a series of papers was presented by GRABAR and his co-workers, is now represented by several papers from various authors. The other papers in this series of more or less technical contributions, deal with chromatography.

General biochemical problems are treated next, followed by an important series of papers relating to the binding properties of proteins.

The next section deals with the nutritional aspects of proteins. A large group of lecturers discussed the present status of the carnitine problem. This nitrogenous compound belonging to the widely distributed group of betaines is only found in animals, and its origin, function and fate are still obscure.

Next, the relation of protein problems to pathology is considered, the serum protein pattern, the macroglobulins and the urinary proteins being discussed.

The Colloquium was concluded with a Round Table Discussion on *Advances in the Analysis and Pathology of Proteins and Related Substances*. In this discussion, an attempt was made to approach the many problems connected with the biochemistry of proteins, from various angles by bringing together opinions and views from various countries as widely separated as Africa, Japan and North America.

Once again the original purpose of these Colloquia—to be the annual meeting place of all those interested in protein problems and to be as far as possible the *United Nations of the Protein World*—has been maintained.

Bruges, 1959

HUB. PEETERS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The members of the Scientific Committee of the Seventh Colloquium are glad to have the opportunity of expressing their sincere appreciation for the generous financial support given by the Provincial Government of West Flanders.

The personal interest shown by the Governor, Chevalier P. VAN OUTRYVE D'YDEWALLE, and by Mr. J. STORME, Member of the Council, were of great help to our work.

It is a pleasure to thank the Local Authorities of the City of Bruges, especially, Mr. P. VANDAMME, Burgomaster, and Mr. F. VANDENBROELE, Magistrate, as well as the President, the Very Reverend A. LOGGHE, and the Members of the Public Assistance Committee, for their collaboration in the general organization of the Congress.

We wish to express our gratitude to the Mother Superior and the Sisters of the St. Jans Hospital for their co-operation and also to Miss R. ROMMELAERE, who has been secretary to the Colloquium for seven years.

We are also indebted to many others, too numerous to mention, who gave unstintingly of their time and effort to make this undertaking a success.

The Scientific Committee of the Seventh Colloquium

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CONTENTS

Academic session

- * The synthesis of antibodies and proteins
by H. E. SCHULTZE (Marburg/Lahn, Deutschland) 1

Technical subjects

- On some interactions occurring between agar and certain substances submitted to electrophoresis in this medium
by R. J. WIEME (Ghent, Belgium) 18
- Determination of Tiselius mobilities by paper electrophoresis with evaporation
by H. WALDMANN-MEYER AND K. SCHILLING (Copenhagen) 24
- Evaluation of thermodynamic protein-ion binding constants by paper electrophoresis
by H. WALDMANN-MEYER (Copenhagen) 25
- Standardisation des polarogrammes de Bredicka
par E. BALLE-HELAERS (Bruxelles) 26
- Free zone electrophoresis
by S. HJERTÉN (Uppsala, Sweden) 28
- Immuno-electrophoresis of two-dimensional patterns
by H. PEETERS AND P. VUYLSTEKE (Bruges, Belgium) 31
- ** Gel structure and the diffusion of proteins
by CH. WUNDERLY (Zurich, Switzerland) 36
- ** Quantitation of plasma proteins on cellulose acetate strips
by F. ALBERT-RECHT (Edinburgh, Great Britain) 36
- Spectrophotometric determination of serum proteins in the region 200–220 m μ
by M. P. TOMBS, K. B. COOKE, F. SOUTER AND N. F. MACLAGAN (London) 37
- ** Untersuchungen über eine quantitative Eiweissbestimmung
von P. GERHARDT SCHEULEN (Tübingen, Deutschland) 42
- Quantitative Untersuchungen zur Kupferchloridfällung von Eiweisskörpern
von C. RIEBELING (Hamburg, Deutschland) 43

Immuno-electrophoresis

- Études immunoélectrophorétiques des protéines perchlorosolubles des sérums humains normaux et pathologiques: Identification de certaines fractions
par CH. DE VAUX ST. CYR (Paris) 48
- ** Immunochemical studies on protein pathology
The immunoglobulin concept
by J. F. HEREMANS (Louvain, Belgium) 53
- ** Étude immuno-chimique du fibrinogène et de ses dérivés
par J. SALMON (Liège, Belgique) 54
- Versuche zur Organ-Immunoelektrophorese
von M. KESSEL (Berlin) 55
- Immunoelektrophorese von Speichelproteinen
von F. GABL (Innsbruck, Österreich) 61
- Electrophoretic and immunological studies on some body fluids in normal and pathological conditions and a preliminary communication on the separation of proteins of the labyrinthine fluids
by J. KOHN (Roehampton, Great Britain) 67

Chromatography

- Chromatographic investigations on the heterogeneity of normal human haemoglobin
by C. A. MEIJERING AND T. H. J. HUISMAN (Groningen, The Netherlands) 71
- ** Fractionation of polypeptides and proteins on dextran gels
by J. PORATH (Uppsala, Sweden) 79

* This paper has already been published in *Clin. Chim. Acta*, 4(1959) 610.

** Summary only, the complete paper has been published in *Clin. Chim. Acta*.

* The chromatography of serum proteins on cellulose ion exchange columns by K. B. COOKE, M. P. TOMBS, R. D. WESTON, F. SOUTER AND N. F. MAGLAGAN (London)	79
Chromatography of plasma proteins in combination with starch-gel electrophoresis by C. G. HOLMBERG AND L. E. WESTLUND (Lund, Sweden)	80
Étude chromatographique des acides aminés dans les liquides d'épanchement par F. PENARANDA (Angers, France)	85
* Quantitative determination of amino acids by combined displacement and paper chromatography by F. LUNDQUIST (Copenhagen)	89
<i>Biochemistry</i>	
Further observations on the development of foetal proteins by J. BODMAN (Richmond, Great Britain)	90
The measurement of serum chymotrypsin inhibitor titre (demonstration) by J. BODMAN (Richmond, Great Britain)	96
Tous les acides aminés réagissent-ils à la ninhydrine? par E. J. BIGWOOD (Bruxelles, Belgique)	99
Étude de l'évolution de la lysine au cours des traitements thermiques du lait par J. DULCINO ET R. LONTIE (Louvain, Belgique)	100
Étude comparative des toxicités chroniques des monochlorhydrates de L- et DL-lysine par J. MOLLE ET M. VIGNERON (Allier, France)	105
Studies on soluble RNA, a possible intermediate in protein biosynthesis by H. BLOEMENDAL AND L. BOSCH (Amsterdam)	110
* The biological behaviour of normal and denatured human plasma albumin by T. FREEMAN (London)	115
Sur les rapports entre les polysaccharides neutres du tissu conjonctif et du sang par B. ROBERT ET L. ROBERT (Paris)	116
Recherches sur l'action hypertensive du val ₅ -octapeptide et de l'isoleu ₅ -octapeptide synthétiques chez le chien par G. BARAC (Liège, Belgique)	123
Studies on hemolymph proteins of insects of medical importance by means of micro-electrophoresis in agar gel by G. MISSELIJN, D. KARCHER, F. DE KEYSER AND M. VAN SANDE (Antwerp, Belgium)	127
Thalasso-drépanocytose ou sicklanémie grave? Étude des hémoglobines de la famille d'un drépanocytaire par R. DELCOURT (Ixelles, Belgique)	134
Über das Vorkommen von Ferritin im Serum Eine neue serologische Methode zur Bestimmung von Ferritin im Serum und ihre Ergebnisse von F. WÖHLER (Freiburg/Brsg., Deutschland)	143
<i>Binding properties of proteins</i>	
Mécanisme de combinaison de l'hémoglobine avec l'haptoglobine et cinétique de l'activité peroxydasique du complexe par L. ROBERT ET J. SERPICELLI (Paris)	154
Binding ability of cytoplasmic proteins II. Distribution equilibria of thyroid hormones, soluble proteins and liver mitochondria by E. KALLEE (Tübingen, Deutschland)	161
Austauschkinetik der Plasmaproteine zwischen Blut und Körperhöhlen von K. OEFF (Berlin)	164
Verteilung und Umsatz von Phosphatverbindungen in Serum und Leberextrakten Elektrophoretische Untersuchungen mit Radio-Phosphor von H. -J. SCHLIEF (Berlin)	171
Interaction de la 3,5,3'-triiodothyronine avec la sérumalbumine par G. BARAC (Liège, Belgique)	178
Changements biochimiques dans l'amyloïdose expérimentale I. Études morphologiques et histochimiques sur les tissus de souris dans l'amyloïdose expérimentale par H. E. CHRISTENSEN, R. RASK-NIELSEN ET J. CLAUSEN (Copenhagen)	184
Biochemical changes in experimental amyloidosis II. Paper-electrophoretic investigations on serum and urine from mice with experimental amyloidosis by R. RASK-NIELSEN, J. CLAUSEN AND H. E. CHRISTENSEN (Copenhagen)	190

* Summary only, the complete paper has been published in *Clin. Chim. Acta*.

Biochemical changes in experimental amyloidosis	
III. Immunochemical investigations on sera and urines from mice with experimental amyloidosis	
by J. CLAUSEN, H. E. CHRISTENSEN AND R. RASK-NIELSEN (Copenhagen)	196
The behaviour of antigen-antibody complexes in paper electrophoresis	
by J. M. RHODES (Copenhagen)	203
<i>Nutrition - General problems</i>	
Methods of assessing the nutritive value of proteins	
by K. J. CARPENTER (Cambridge, Great Britain)	207
Utilisation d'un mélange d'acides-amino racémiques administré par voie intraveineuse chez l'homme	
par P. DE GASQUET, R. LOWY ET J. TREMOLIÈRES (Paris)	212
* Correlation of amino acid composition with nutritive value of proteins	
by A. E. BENDER (London)	219
Intestinal absorption of nitrogen	
by E. G. HOLMES AND S. J. DARKE (Mwanza, Tanganyika)	220
* Biochemical changes caused by protein deficiency in young children	
by R. F. A. DEAN (Kampala, Uganda)	225
The cutaneous loss of nitrogen compounds in African adults	
by S. J. DARKE (Mwanza, Tanganyika)	226
Effets d'un complément alimentaire de levure sur la croissance du nourrisson normalement alimenté	
par A. BOHN ET H. GOUNELLE (Paris)	230
* Über einen neuen, hereditären, von Vitamin-B ₆ abhängige Störung im Tryptophan-Stoffwechsel von A. KNAPP (Berlin)	234
<i>Nutrition - Carnitine</i>	
Die biologische Bedeutung des Carnitins im Tierkörper	
von E. STRACK, W. ROTZSCH UND I. LORENZ (Leipzig, Deutschland)	235
Action of carnitine on excitable tissues of vertebrates	
by T. HAYASHI (Tokyo)	239
Action de la carnitine et de la bétaine crotonique sur la croissance d'os embryonnaires "in vitro"	
par S. LIÉBECQ-HUTTER (Liège, Belgique)	245
Aufbau und Abbau des Carnitins im Tierkörper	
von E. STRACK, H. AURICH, I. LORENZ UND W. ROTZSCH (Leipzig, Deutschland)	248
* Action clinique et humorale de la carnitine dans les syndromes de dénutrition post-infectieux de l'enfance	
par P. BORNICHE ET P. CANLORBE (Paris)	251
The general site of carnitine action on palmitate metabolism by heart muscle	
by I. B. FRITZ AND E. KAPLAN (Ann Arbor, Mich.)	252
Ineffectiveness of DL-carnitine as an inhibiting factor on the striated muscle of the frog	
by H. FRIEBEL (Bonn, Germany)	260
* Effet de la carnitine sur l'hyperlipidémie diabétique	
par J. BEKAERT ET G. DELTOUR (Bruxelles)	262
Der Einfluss des Carnitins auf die Stoffwechselgrösse im Organismus	
von E. STRACK UND W. ROTZSCH (Leipzig, Deutschland)	263
Effects of carnitine on output and composition of lymph and milk	
by A. F. DE SCHAEPPDYVER AND G. R. DE VLEESCHHOUWER (Ghent, Belgium)	268
Action de la carnitine (chlorure de DL-carnitine) et de ses esters sur quelques structures cholinergiques	
par E. PHILIPPOT, M. J. DALLEMAGNE ET R. CHARLIER (Liège et Bruxelles)	270
* Détermination de la carnitine dans les milieux biologiques	
par G. DELTOUR, J. BROEKHUYSEN ET L. DIERICKX (Bruxelles)	274
The isolation and probable nature of several amines and betaines from normal brain tissue	
by E. A. HOSEIN (Montreal, Canada)	275
<i>Pathology - General subjects</i>	
Plasma proteins and plasma lipids	
by J. B. ALLISON AND R. W. WANNEMACHER, JR. (New Brunswick, N. J.)	281
Untersuchungen zur hormonellen Beeinflussung des zirkulierenden Gesamteiweisses, Albumins und Plasmaproteins	
von F. W. ALY UND A. A. MÜLLER (Marburg, Deutschland)	285
* Summary only, the complete paper has been published in <i>Clin. Chim. Acta</i> .	

* Sur la réaction au phénol de Kunkel Études des fractions lipoprotéidiques par électrophorèse bidimensionnelle par D. VINCENT, J. POLONOVSKI ET R. WALD (Paris)	292
Action du chlorure de sodium sur l'oxyhémoglobine humaine par A. LUZZATI, N. BENHAMOU, M. DAUNE ET G. WEILL (Strasbourg, France)	294
Über das Eindringen von Serumproteinen in die Aorteninnenhaut und früheste, nur polarisationsoptisch erkennbare Lipideinlagerungen in die Kaninchenaorta von H. P. MISSMAHL UND H. OTT (Tübingen, Deutschland)	301
Beiträge zur Regulierung des Albumingehaltes im Blutplasma von J. GERGELY UND L. MITUSOVA (Budapest)	305
Measurement of relative mobility after agar electrophoresis as a means of identification of spinal fluid protein fractions by A. LOWENTHAL, D. KARCHER AND M. VAN SANDE (Antwerp, Belgium)	309
Grass pollen and mould antigens and their antibodies, including reagins by R. AUGUSTIN AND B. J. HAYWARD (London)	314
Glukagon, das zweite Inselzellhormon des Pankreas von A. LINKE (Heidelberg, Deutschland)	323
<i>Pathology - Serum protein pattern</i>	
Untersuchungen zur elektrophoretischen Trennung von Serumeiweißkörpern an einer Cellulose-Acetat-Folie von A. ORIOL-BOSCH UND K. D. VOIGT (Hamburg-Eppendorf, Deutschland)	332
Diagnostic du cancer de la prostate par micro-electrophorèse en gel de gelose par M. VAN SANDE, K. VAN CAMP ET L. DENIS (Anvers, Belgique)	339
* Clinical uses of starch gel electrophoresis with special reference to leukaemia by A. L. LATNER AND A. H. ZAKI (Newcastle Upon Tyne, Great Britain)	342
Contribution à l'étude des protéines et des lipoprotéines du sang chez des sujets exposés aux vapeurs de trichloréthylène par CH. GUYOTJEANNIN, P. CRABIÉ, N. GUYOTJEANNIN ET J. VAN STEENKISTE (Paris et Billancourt, France)	343
Weitere Ergebnisse der Kurvenanalytik Erkennbare Ordnung anderer analytischer Werte von F. J. REIN (Tautenbronn, Deutschland)	349
<i>Pathology - Macroglobulins</i>	
Bence-Jones Proteine und ihre Beziehungen zu anderen physiologischen und pathologischen Plasmaproteinen von F. LOHSS (Tübingen, Deutschland)	357
Immunological studies on dissociation of human macroglobulins by W. H. HITZIG AND H. C. ISLIKER (Berne)	368
The nature of the rheumatoid macro-globulin by H. COKE (London)	376
* Étude en solution diluée de macroglobulines normales et dégradées par P. METAIS, A. M. KOVACS-JUNG ET M. DAUNE (Strasbourg, France)	383
<i>Pathology - Urinary proteins</i>	
Harnsteinmatrixuntersuchungen mit Hilfe der Immunoelktrophorese von H. J. KEUTEL (Homburg, Deutschland)	384
Die Uroproteine bei der Harnsteinkrankheit von G. HERMANN (Homburg, Deutschland)	389
Studies on normal urinary colloids by M. TH. HEREMANS, J. P. VAERMAN AND J. F. HEREMANS (Louvain, Belgium)	396
<i>Round Table Conference</i>	
Advances in the analysis and pathology of proteins and related substances Chairman: H. PEETERS (Bruges)	404
Author Index	417
Subject Index	418

ACADEMIC SESSION

THE SYNTHESIS OF ANTIBODIES AND PROTEINS*

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In the last few years biochemists have been very successful in the investigation and the chemical synthesis of active biological substances. This progress has extended to the secrets surrounding the protein, that vital source of biological and biocatalytical activity.

The role of amino acid sequence in protein chemistry

The work of numerous investigators has shown that the properties of proteins and their special functions as enzymes, hormones, toxins etc., depend on their chemical

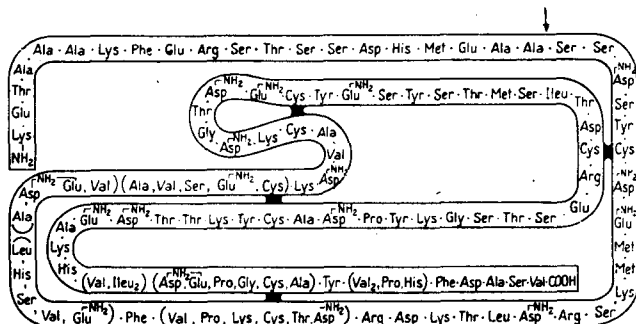


Fig. 1. The peptide chain of the ribonuclease molecule.

constitution and particularly on the sequence of the different amino acids contained in each protein. However, it has been shown that only a certain site of the protein molecule is responsible for a particular activity¹. For example the sequence, aspartic acid-serine-glycine, was found to be an important constituent of the active range in the peptide chains of the proteolytic enzymes, α -chymotrypsin²⁻⁵, trypsin⁶⁻⁸ and thrombin⁹. The active centre of the ribonuclease molecule which consists of one peptide chain of 124 amino acids^{10, 11} was discovered¹² in the area surrounding the 20th and 21st amino acid (Fig. 1) counted from the terminal free aminogroup.

Deviations in the sequence of the peptide chains were also noted in proteins like insulin¹³ or cytochrome c¹⁴⁻¹⁶ when prepared from different animals. In the case of serum albumins the influence of species specificity is easily detectable by determination of the end groups of the chain (Table I). The differences are especially evident in albumins produced from unrelated animals.

* This paper has already been published in *Clin. Chim. Acta*, 4 (1959) 610.

TABLE I
END GROUP COMPOSITION OF SERUM ALBUMINS OF DIFFERENT ORIGIN

Species	NH ₂ -end	COOH-end
Man ¹⁷	Asp·Ala·	·Gly·Val·Ala·Leu ^{19, 20}
Ox ¹⁷	Asp·Thr·	Asp·Glu·Lys·Ser·Val·Thr·Leu·Ala ¹⁹
Horse ¹⁸	Asp·Thr·	Val·Ser·Leu·Ala ¹⁹
Ass ¹⁸	(Asp·Thr·)	Ser·(Val·Lys)·Leu·Ala ^{19, 20}
Mule ¹⁸	(Asp·Thr·)	(·Leu·Ala) ¹⁹
Rabbit ^{20, 21}	Asp·	Leu·Ala ²⁰
Sheep ²⁰	Asp·	(Glu·Asp·Thr)·Ser·Val·Lys·Leu·Ala ²⁰
Monkey ²⁰	Asp·	(Asp·Glu)·Ser·Lys·Val·Leu·Ala ²⁰
Pig ^{17, 20}	Asp·	

These examples demonstrate the great importance of chemical investigations of proteins. The knowledge of the chemical constitution of the peptide elements provides us with the most reliable information not only as to the specific action, but also as to the origin of a protein. This fundamental part of protein structure, called the primary

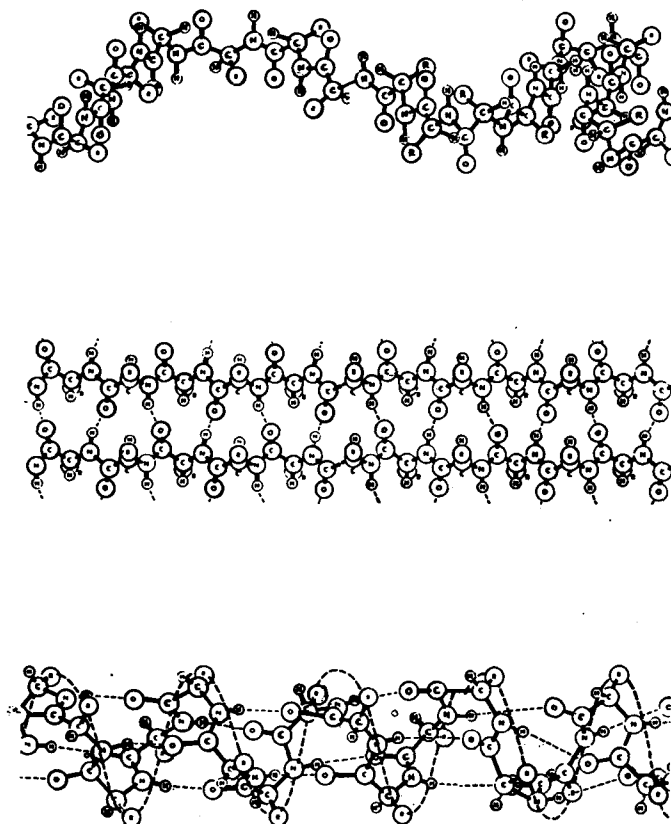


Fig. 2. Secondary structure of peptide chains²². α -Helix; β -configuration; arbitrary chain.

References p. 14/17

structure, is hereditary, which means that the synthesis of peptides is controlled by genes. It determines the secondary structure (Fig. 2) of the different types of folding of the peptide chains and finally the tertiary structure (Fig. 3), which represents the three-dimensional configuration of the proteins which are usually of very high molecular weight.

The determining influence of the primary structure on the properties of the whole molecule is clearly shown by the hemoglobins Hb A, Hb S and Hb C²⁴. Their differences in structure and electrophoretic behaviour arise from the fact that of the total amount of 300 amino acids of Hb A one single glutamic acid group is substituted by valine or lysine in the two other hemoglobins.

The nature of antibodies

The only type of protein whose biological activity is not hereditary but acquired by antigen stimulus of exogenous or endogenous origin is the antibody. Like the enzymes, proteohormones and pharmacologically efficient proteins, the antibodies

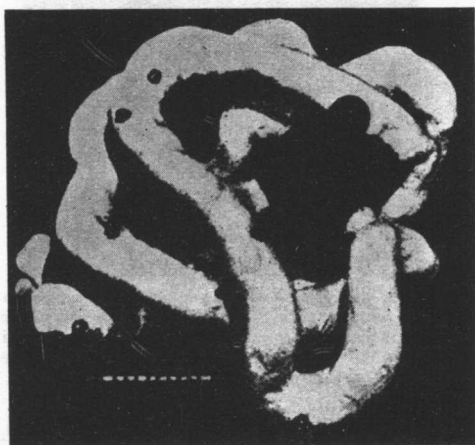


Fig. 3. Three-dimensional model of the myoglobin molecule²⁵.

are characterized by a high degree of specificity in their mode of reaction. Even in the early days of antitoxin discovery BEHRING found that the binding and neutralizing capacity of the diphtheria antitoxin or of the tetanus antitoxin was extended only to the homologous toxins.

According to recent investigations, the antibodies—whether derived from animals or humans—may be considered as representatives of a genetically related class of proteins. In view of their generally slow mobility and of their immunochemical behaviour (Fig. 4) it seems advisable to regard the antibodies as components of the γ -globulin system.

Most human γ -globulin is poor in carbohydrates and proteins with the slow sedimentation rate of $S = 7$ (mol. wt. = 156,000). In immuno-electrophoretic analysis it shows an extended precipitation band instead of the usual circular band (Fig. 4b).

References p. 14/17

Inhomogeneity is confirmed by the chemical analysis of the slower and faster moving fractions, which differ in the content of neuraminic acid²⁸. This phenomenon can be explained by the immuno-chemical relationship of several protein individuals deviating from each other in electrophoretic mobility.

Another characteristic of this fraction is the occurrence of numerous antibodies (shown in Table II).

The small β_2 A-fraction, isolated by the HEREMANS²⁸ procedure, also shows signs of inhomogeneity as regards its behaviour in immuno-electrophoresis (Fig. 4e) and the complex composition of antibodies. The carbohydrate content of β_2 A-globulins is much higher than that of the main fraction mentioned above.

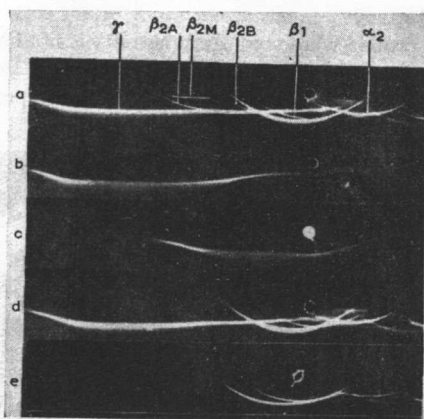


Fig. 4. Immuno-electrophoretic analysis of human γ -globulin components. (a) normal human serum; (b) normal γ -globulin components $S_{20, w} = 7$, poor in carbohydrates; (c) β_2 A-globulin components $S_{20, w} = 7$, rich in carbohydrates with traces of β_2 M-globulin $S_{20, w} = 18$, rich in carbohydrates; (d) normo- γ -globulinemia; (e) agammaglobulinemia. All tested with rabbit anti-serum against human serum.

The macro molecular β_2 M-globulin²⁷⁻³⁰ is identical with γ_1 M³¹⁻³³ ($S = 18-20$, mol. wt. = 900,000), which has not yet been isolated with a high degree of purity, and is also rich in carbohydrates.

Its electrophoretic mobility corresponds to that of the β_2 A-globulin but, unlike the components with the sedimentation constant $S = 7$, the β_2 M-globulin is altered by the action of sulphhydryl compounds like cysteine or mercaptoethanol, the sedimentation constant being reduced by such treatment from $S = 18-20$ to $S = 7$ ³⁴⁻³⁷. This dissociation of the macro molecular component of the γ -globulin system is accompanied by a total loss of antibodies. In our experiments with γ -globulin fractions accumulated in β_2 M we found a parallel increase of antibodies against polysaccharides of blood groups or bacteria (Table II). Pneumococcus-polysaccharide antibodies from horse, ox and pig^{38, 39} also belong to the macro molecular type.

Finally, *properdin* belongs to the group of macro molecular antibodies. PILLEMER, BLATTBERG, NELSON and others⁴⁰⁻⁴² have shown that it has heterophilic activities (Table II) and moves in electrophoresis at the rate of the fast γ -globulins or slow β -globulins.

The occurrence of other representatives of the γ -globulin system with specific affinities is possible. We agree with GRABAR that these γ -globulins may function as transport substances primarily for metabolites in a general physiological mechanism but secondarily also for antigenic materials of endogenous or exogenous origin. Recent experiments in the field of plant hemagglutinins⁴⁶ have revealed that the protein of

TABLE II
DISTRIBUTION OF NATURALLY ACQUIRED ANTIBODIES IN THE COMPONENTS
OF HUMAN γ -GLOBULIN SYSTEM

γ -globulin components*	γ -globulins low in carbo- hydrate**	β_1A - globulin***	β_2M -globulin	Properdin
	Antibody activity§			Antibody against:
Diphtheria	+++	++	+	zymosan
Tetanus	++	+	++	levan
Typhoid H	++	+	++	dextran
Typhoid O	+	++	+++	polysaccharid (shiga, coli a.o.)
Paratyphoid B	+	+	+++	stromata of
Pertussis	+			erythrocytes and
Poliomyelitis typ I-III	++	++	++	organ cells
Isoagglutinins (anti-A a.B)		+	+++	phages
				New castle virus
				protozoes
				rh-agglutin.
				cold-agglutin.
				reagins
				lues-antib.
				Forssman antib.
				hemolys. (rabbit)
Electrophoresis§§	0.5-2.1	1.2-3.6		
Sedimentation constant§§§	7.1	7	18-20	27
Hexoses	1.4	3.2	4.2	
Fucose	0.19	0.22	0.46	
Acetylhexosamine	1.1	2.9	3.0	
Acetyl neuraminic acid	0.23	1.8	2.0	

* In total γ -globulin fractions: antibodies against scarlet fever, smallpox, herpes, varicella, rubella infect. and hematog. hepatitis and infect. mononucleosis.

** Free of β_1A - and β_2M -globulin.

*** Traces of β_2M -globulin.

§ Own results.

§§ pH = 8.6; $-\mu \cdot 10^{-5} \text{ cm}^2/\text{V} \cdot \text{sec.}$

§§§ $S_{10, w} \cdot 10^{-13} \text{ cm}^2/\text{sec} \cdot \text{dyn.}$

the seed of *laburnum alpinum*, which has a high binding capacity for blood group substances, also has the physicochemical characteristics of a γ -globulin. We have, therefore, to include a large group of naturally occurring proteins in our system of γ -globulins or binding globulins, and we may conclude that there is only a gradual and not a fundamental difference between the so-called normal γ -globulins and those of an acquired specificity, namely the antibodies.

The individual antibodies can naturally differ in electrophoretic mobility as well

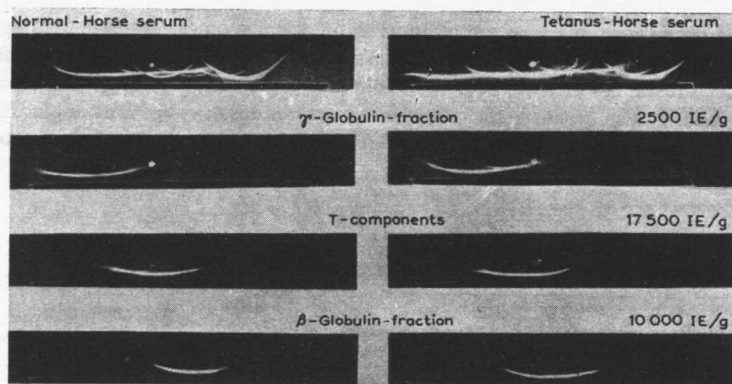


Fig. 5. Immuno-electrophoretic analysis of isolated globulin fractions of a normal and a hyperimmunised horse.

as in chemical composition⁴⁷⁻⁴⁸. However, no chemical difference has yet been detected between a γ -globulin with a high antibody activity and a γ -globulin of the same rate of migration with no, or only a low, antibody specificity⁴⁹.

Fig. 5 illustrates the conformity in the immuno-electrophoretic test with rabbit antiserum against horse serum, of γ -globulin fractions from a normal horse and those from a horse hyperimmunised with tetanus-toxin, both separated by zone electrophoresis. According to Table III no differences in carbohydrate content can be observed in the corresponding fractions.

The probability that the acquired immune specificity could be accompanied by a deviation—possibly only slight—in the primary structure, *i.e.* in the amino acid composition, cannot be excluded, because the complete analysis of the γ -globulin peptide chains has not yet been carried out. But in the case of rabbit γ -globulin, which consists

TABLE III
CARBOHYDRATE CONTENT OF ISOLATED GLOBULIN FRACTIONS OF A NORMAL AND A HYPERIMMUNISED HORSE

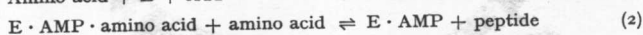
Protein	Antitoxin units/g	Electro- phoretic mobility*	Hexoses	Acetyl hexos- amine	Acetyl neuraminic acid
(a) Before immunisation					
Normal- γ -globulin		1.7	1.1	1.1	0.22
Normal-T-globulin		4.4	2.1	1.9	0.89
Normal- β -globulin		5.5	3.3	2.8	1.74
(b) After immunisation					
Anti-tetanus- γ -globulin	2,500	1.9	1.1	0.9	0.25
Anti-tetanus-T-globulin	17,500	3.5	2.0	1.9	0.69
Anti-tetanus- β -globulin	10,000	4.4	2.6	2.3	1.49
Anti-diphtheria- γ -globulin	5,000	1.7	1.5	1.4	0.39
Anti-diphtheria-T-globulin	25,000	3.5	2.2	1.9	0.71

* pH = 8.6; — 10^{-5} cm²/V · sec.

of a single peptide chain, the same pentapeptide sequence was found in a normal and in an antibody-containing γ -globulin⁵⁰. HAUROWITZ' view, now generally accepted, is that the antibody specificity is caused merely by an abnormal mode of folding of the peptide chains, which results in the formation of a "combining site" complementarily adjusted to one of the "determinant groups" of the antigen molecule⁵¹. We have, therefore, to distinguish between the hereditary specificity of proteins based on the amino acid pattern and the acquired specificity of γ -globulins caused by alterations in the secondary or tertiary structure. This statement leads to the conclusion that the mechanism for the synthesis of the peptide chain of antibodies is the same as that for all the other proteins.

The formation of peptide bonds and proteins in general

The energy required for the formation of the typical peptide bonds is supplied by the following reactions:



E = specific enzyme ATP = adenosine triphosphate
PP = pyrophosphate AMP = adenosine monophosphate

Generally the reaction site of this first step in protein synthesis⁵² is the living cell (Fig. 6). However, the formation of peptides and even of proteins also takes place in

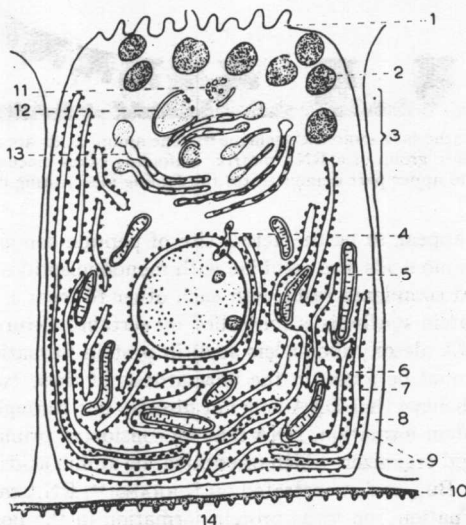


Fig. 6. Stepwise organization of an exocrine cell of the mouse pancreas (Scheme according to SjöSTRAND⁵³). 1 and 9: cell membrane (60 Å in diameter); 2: zymogen granules (store of enzymes); 3: GOLGI apparatus, consisting of double membranes with vacuoli inside; 4: breaking through of nucleolar substance (RNA); 5: mitochondrion, bordered by an outer double-edged membrane, inside with cristae (producer of energy, store of energy; dimensions $1/2 \mu \times 3$ to 8μ); 6: base of nucleolar membranes with = 7: granula attached to one side, probable microsomes (loci of protein synthesis, dimensions ~ 140 Å in diameter); 8: space between two cells; 10: basement membrane; 11-13: particles of the GOLGI apparatus, vacuoli.

tissue slices or homogenates if the following factors are present: adenosine-triphosphate, an ATP-generating system, guanosine-triphosphate or guanosine-diphosphate, microsomes and a soluble cell extract⁵³⁻⁵⁷.

The soluble enzymes and ATP have been found to effect the initial carboxyl activation of amino acids⁵⁹. The activating enzymes are probably specific for the different amino acids⁶⁰⁻⁶¹. The adenyl-amino acids are extremely reactive intermediates and exist probably only in combination with the enzyme. It is not yet clear whether the so-called activated amino acids are identical with adenyl-amino acids.

The soluble extract contains a labile form of ribonucleic acid named S-RNA⁶², which has a low molecular weight. This RNA-derivative activates and binds amino acids in the presence of ATP by an ester bond to ribose⁶³⁻⁶⁴. The amino acids so bound to ribonucleic acid are subsequently transferred to microsomal protein, and this transfer is dependent upon guanosine-triphosphate. The ribonucleoprotein particles

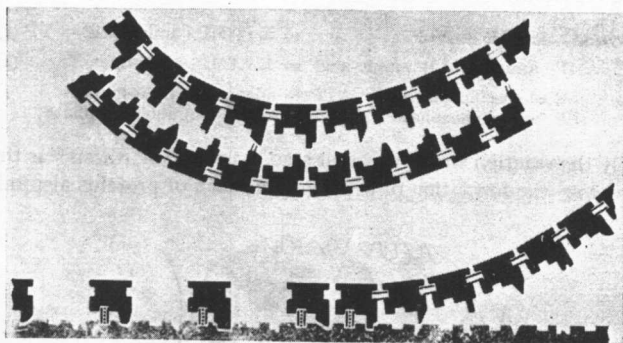


Fig. 7. Polypeptide synthesis (ZAMECNIK's scheme⁶⁵). The amino acids are activated by ATP and bound on the phosphoric group of a RNA-matrix. Unfolding takes place after the formation of peptide bonds. The upper part demonstrates the folding and uniting of two chains.

of the microsomes appear to be the actual site of peptide condensation. It is quite possible that the amino acids also combine with mononucleotides and that these nucleotidyl-amino acid complexes react with each other to form a nucleoprotein⁶⁵. In fact, the rate of protein synthesis is controlled by certain mixtures of nucleotides.

The role of DNA (desoxyribonucleic acid) in protein formation is not yet clear. As no correlation could be found in the biosynthesis of these two macromolecules, most investigators believe that DNA acts not directly but through RNA in the reactions leading to protein formation. DNA may be considered primarily as a template, as a more or less rigid organizer, which orientates the amino acids during the process of protein synthesis. But, as demonstrated by SCHRAMM⁶⁶, RNA can act as a template and transfer "information" on virus protein formation in the host cell. The special mechanism by which the peptide chain is unbound from the matrix and folded is not yet known⁶⁷.

Some idea may be derived from the scheme of polypeptide synthesis illustrated in Fig. 7.

A specific sequence of amino acids in the peptide chain can also be attributed to the action of a series of highly specific enzymes. The term zymosequential specificity,

however, has been coined for an assumed kind of enzymes which continually change their specificity⁶⁹. The older enzyme theory, which explained the transfer of specificity by a successive action in the filing of amino acids in a chain, has been refuted by experiments with isotopes. Whichever theory we prefer, the template or the enzyme theory, we have reason to believe that the specificity of a protein based on a typical sequence of the amino acids in its peptide chain is genetically determined.

With regard to the antibodies, we know that they have the same amino acid composition, the same terminal amino acids and most probably also the same amino acid sequence as other γ -globulins without the special activity, therefore we must investigate the influence of genes in the different steps of antibody formation.

Origin of antibodies

One of the most important discoveries about antibodies is the observation that the liver, which is the principal organ of protein synthesis, is seldom engaged in antibody production⁷⁰⁻⁷². If antigen is injected intravenously, most of the antibody is formed in the spleen⁷³ or in the bone-marrow. Local injections lead to antibody for-

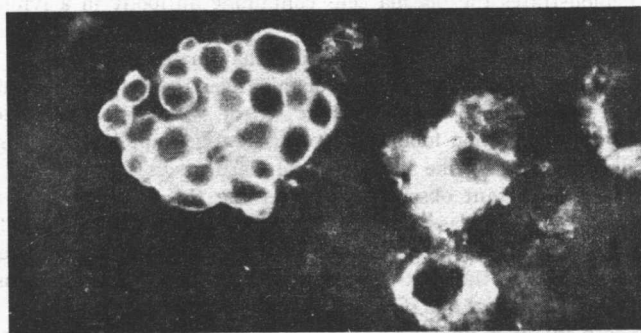


Fig. 8. Plasma cells stained by the Coons' technique. Mesenteric lymph node with plasma cells containing antibody.

mation in the regional lymph nodes^{74, 75}. It is possible that antibodies synthesized by different cells have a different electrophoretic mobility and different amino acid end groups^{76, 77}.

FAGRAEUS⁷⁸⁻⁸² first discovered a relationship between antibody production and the appearance of plasma cells in the spleen and lymph nodes of immunised animals. She also observed an increase particularly of immature plasma cells in tissue cultures of extirpated spleen tissue from rabbits sensitized with typhoid vaccine. The origin of the plasma cells is not yet clear. Some investigators⁷⁸⁻⁸³ suggest that, like the plasma cells produced in the bone-marrow of patients suffering from myelomatosis, they stem from reticulum cells, while others⁸³⁻⁸⁷ regard them as transformed lymphocytes.

The histochemical identification of antibody-containing plasma cells has been much facilitated by COONS'⁸⁸⁻⁹² tracer method, using fluorescein-isocyanate, which is easily bound by proteins. As a result of an immune reaction the stained antibody is fixed by those cells containing the homologous antigen or by the cells engaged in antibody formation, if a layer of the specific antigen is artificially deposited on their sur-

References p. 14/17