

The Biophysical Characterisation of the Cell Surface

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Preface

“ கஞ்சு நக மன்னமு

கல்பாத்து உலகமு ”

இளையவர்

What we have learnt is a fistful of earth

What we are yet to learn is as vast as the Earth*

St Avvaiyyar

(Tamil Poetess 11th Century, India)

A major part of the research activity in the field of membrane biology has been concerned with the cell surface and has involved the characterisation of the components of the membrane surface, their organisation and topographical distribution. The cell surface owes this privileged position to its ubiquitous participation, mediated by the macromolecular components, in diverse biological events such as cell division, growth, differentiation, morphogenesis, neoplasia, cell recognition, antigenicity, and in the communication of environmental information to the cell. Therefore little need be said in justification of a book which aspires to review the field of cell surface biology, notwithstanding the limitations imposed on it by the state of my knowledge and interpretation of the events. This branch of membrane biology is so vast that I have approached it with a sense of humility which has been impressed on me by the quoted verse written by the 11th Century Tamil poetess St Avvaiyyar,* and which also serves to emphasise the finite state of our current knowledge of the complexities of biological phenomena.

The growth of science and the advance of scientific thought has, as the history of science would show, been generally non-uniform, with bursts

* Translation by courtesy of Dr M. S. Lakshmi.

of scientific activity interspersed with relatively more quiet periods. The peaks of activity have nearly always accompanied the invention and development of new technology. Bernal's* description of science as "ordered technique" aptly describes this association. Therefore science as a whole or any of its branches can be treated in two different ways, namely as unfolded by technical innovation and advance or as a compilation of observation and discussion. In this book I have taken the former course, and have discussed the theoretical aspects of some biophysical methods and have examined their application in the characterisation of the cell surface. I have then attempted a collation and integration of the different kinds of data relating to the cell surface in its normal state and as affected by some disease processes. I hope I have succeeded in giving the book a sense of cohesion rather than let it appear as a mixture of methods and results. In the main the book is about the cell surface as visualised by a number of bioelectric and electrokinetic techniques.

The scope of this book is wide simply by virtue of the subject being treated. Although the book would appear somewhat specialised in the sense that it deals only with the cell surface, I expect that it would prove its relevance in several fields of study such as cell differentiation, embryology, cancer research, cell biology, immunology and virology. It has been intended for use at the research level but I feel confident that it would prove useful also at the undergraduate level. If indeed it did, I would consider the time taken to write it well spent.

I am grateful to my many friends and colleagues who read through parts or whole of the manuscript and offered valuable criticism. I would like especially to acknowledge the help I received from the late Professor J. A. V. Butler, FRS; Professor David Kessel; Dr M. S. Lakshmi; Professor J. S. Mitchell, FRS; Professor K. R. Rees and Dr P. A. Riley. I am thankful to the large number of fellow scientists and publishers who most graciously allowed me to reproduce their published data and figures. Most of the work in my laboratory while at the University College Hospital Medical School and at the Chester Beatty Research Institute was done in collaboration with Dr Lakshmi without whose help perhaps there would have been little research of my own, and without whose constant encouragement I could not have written this book. I received financial support for my research from The Beit Memorial Fellowship, The Damon Runyon Memorial Fund, The Lord Dowding Fund for Humane Research, The Medical Research Council, The Peel Medical Research Trust, The Tenovus and The Williams Fellowship and

*Bernal, J. D. (1959) "Science in History". Penguin Books, England, p. 3.

the Central Research Fund of London University, to whom I am deeply indebted. Finally, I would like to thank Academic Press for the most cordial treatment accorded to me and to my book. It has been a considerable pleasure to work with them.

February 1978

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Abbreviations

ADP	Adenosine diphosphate
ALS	Antilymphocyte serum
APF	Aggregation promoting factor
CCD	Counter current distribution
Con A	Concanavalin A (lectin from <i>Canavalia ensiformis</i>)
c.p.m.	counts per minute
CPDS	6,6'-Dithiodinicotinic acid, carboxypyridine disulphide
DAB	Dimethylaminoazobenzene
DFP	Diisopropylfluorophosphate
DMSO	Dimethylsulphoxide
EB virus	Epstein-Barr virus
EDTA	Ethylene diaminetetraacetic acid
EF	Encephalitogenic factor
EI	Ethyleneimine
EKZ	Electrokinetic zone
EM	Electron microscope
EO	Ethylene oxide
EPM	Electrophoretic mobility
e.s.u.	Electrostatic units
FDNB	Fluorodinitrobenzene
5-HT	5-Hydroxytryptamine
IEF	Isoelectric focusing
IEZ	Isoelectric zone
LPS	Bacterial lipopolysaccharide
LVD	Low viscosity dextran
MEM	Macrophage electrophoretic mobility
MSF	Macrophage slowing factor
MW	Molecular weight
NANA	N-Acetylneuraminic acid (sialic acid)
NANase	Neuraminidase (RDE, receptor destroying enzyme)
4-OHA	4-Hydroxyanisole
PAGE	Polyacrylamide gel electrophoresis

PAS	Periodic acid-Schiff reagent
PEG	Polyethylene glycol
PFU	Plaque forming unit
pH	Hydrogen ion concentration
pI	Isoelectric point
pIE	Isoelectrophoretic point
pII	Isoionic point
pK	Ionisation constant
PO	Propylene oxide
PPD	Protein derivative of tubercle bacillus (used as antigen in macrophage electrophoretic mobility test)
PPHE	Post-pH equilibrium
PTSC	Paratoluenyl sulphonyl chloride
PVS	Polyvinyl sulphate
Py	Polyoma virus
Py3T3	Polyoma virus-transformed 3T3 mouse fibroblasts
RDE	Receptor destroying enzyme (neuraminidase)
RNA	Ribonucleic acid
RNAase	Ribonuclease
RSPD	Receptor saturation pI differential value
RSV	Rous sarcoma virus
SDS	Sodium dodecyl sulphate
SL	Stationary level (phase) in electrophoretic cell
SV-40	Simian virus-40
SV-CHK	Simian virus-40-transformed Chinese hamster kidney cells
SV-TRK	Simian virus-40-transformed rabbit kidney cells
SV-3T3	Simian virus-40-transformed 3T3 mouse fibroblasts
TU	Tiselius unit for EPM ($=10^{-5} \text{ cm sec}^{-1} \text{ V}^{-1} \text{ cm}$)
WGA	Wheat germ agglutinin

Symbols

<i>A</i>	Hamaker constant, area
\AA	Ångström ($1 \text{ \AA} = 10^{-8} \text{ cm}$)
<i>d</i>	Thickness of electrical double layer
<i>D</i>	Dielectric constant of water (78.54 at 25°C)
<i>D</i>	Diffusion constant
<i>e</i>	Electronic charge 4.8×10^{-10} e.s.u.
η	Viscosity of solvent
<i>E</i>	Potential gradient in V cm^{-1}
E_m	Membrane potential
<i>f</i>	pH compensation factor for calculating EPM from isoelectric data
<i>F</i>	The Faraday 96 500 coulombs mol^{-1}
<i>H</i>	Distance between particles
<i>i</i>	Current in amperes
<i>I</i>	Ionic strength
<i>k</i>	Boltzmann constant ($1.3803 \times 10^{-23} \text{ J}^\circ\text{K}^{-1}$)
<i>K</i>	Specific conductance
<i>K</i>	Debye-Hückel function; partition coefficient
<i>M</i>	Molarity of solution, gram mole
<i>N</i>	Normality of solution
<i>N</i>	Avogadro's number ($6.023 \times 10^{23} \text{ mol}^{-1}$)
<i>P</i>	Potential of the surface of particle
ψ	Potential at the interface
<i>Q</i>	Net surface charge
<i>r</i>	Radius of curvature of particle
<i>R</i>	Molar gas constant ($8.3144 \text{ J mol}^{-1} \text{ }^\circ\text{K}^{-1}$)
<i>R</i>	Resistance in ohms
<i>S</i>	Svedberg unit
σ	Electrical charge density
<i>t</i>	Time
<i>T</i>	Absolute temperature (absolute zero = -273.15°C)
<i>v</i>	Electrophoretic mobility
<i>V</i>	Velocity; volume
<i>V</i>	Volt

X	Field strength
ζ	Zeta potential
z	Valency of ion

Contents

PREFACE	v
ABBREVIATIONS	xv
SYMBOLS	xvii

1. Membrane Structure and Organisation

Introduction	1
Membrane structure	2
Lipid bilayer structure	2
Micellar structure	2
Fluid mosaic models	3

2. Electrometric Titration of Cells

Early experiments	7
The estimation of surface charge by colloidal titration method	7
Description of method	7
Protocol of experiments	8
Colloid titration of bacteria	9
Colloid titration of rat ascites hepatoma cells	10
A general assessment of colloid titration method	10
The estimation of surface charge by cation exchange method	12

3. Bioelectric Potential and the Cell Surface

Estimation of surface charge by Donnan dilution potential	14
The Donnan membrane equilibrium	14
Measurement of normal Donnan potential	16

Measurement of the displaced Donnan potential	16
Experimental methods	17
Donnan dilution potential titration curves of dermis	19
Interpretation of data obtained using tissues	20
Donnan dilution potential titration curve for mammalian cells	21
Donnan dilution potential titration studies with human erythrocytes	23
General comments	24
Membrane potential and the cell surface	26
Membrane potentials (E_m) of cells	26
Membrane potential and mitotic regulation	27
Membrane potential of malignant cells	30
Relationship between membrane potential and electrokinetic potential	32

4. Cell Electrophoresis

The measurement of electrophoretic mobility	36
The moving boundary method	36
The microscopic method	38
The concept of ζ potential	45
Equation for a large spherical particle	48
Equation for a small spherical particle	50
The relaxation effect on mobility	51
Measurement of EPM by electro-osmosis	52
The electrophoretic investigation of cell surfaces	53
The electrophoretic zone	53
The electrophoresis of blood cells	54
Surface chemistry of bacterial cells	78
The bacterial surface and the age of cultures	78
Bacterial variation	79
Bacterial variants and surface structure	80
Virulence	81
Chemical modification of the bacterial surface	83
Antigenicity and electrophoretic behaviour	85
Electrophoretic investigation of cell-virus interactions	86
Effects of antibodies on electrophoretic mobility	92
Effects of antibodies on EPM of erythrocytes	93
Effects of antibodies on EPM of tumour cells	95
Assay of cell surface antigens	97

The electrophoretic mobility of tumour cells <i>in vivo</i>	101
Antigenic stimulation and electrophoretic mobility of lymphoid cells	101
The effects of complement on electrophoretic mobility of antibody-coated cells	103
The cell surface in morphogenesis	104
Morphogenetic movements	105
Surface changes in embryonic development	106
Electrophoretic characterisation of cells of embryonic primordia	111
Cell sorting	115
Mechanisms of cellular adhesion	120
Electrophoresis of sperm cells	131
Electrophoresis of tumour cells	134
Surface charge of normal and tumour cells	134
Surface charge of normal and virus-transformed cells	135
Sialic acids and malignancy	137
Effects of ultrasound and ionising radiation on tumour cell surface	141
Diagnostic test for cancer: assay of lymphocyte sensitisation by macrophage electrophoretic mobility (MEM) test	142
Assay of cystic fibrosis serum ciliary inhibitory factor	145
Notes added in proof	145

5. Isoelectric Equilibrium Studies of Cell Surfaces

Introduction	146
Notion of isoelectric point of cell surfaces	146
Early experiments	146
Isoelectric focusing	147
The theory of pH gradients	148
Artificial pH gradients	148
Natural pH gradients	148
Essential properties of carrier ampholytes	150
Conductivity of ampholytes	151
Buffering ability	152
Formation of complex with sample	152
Separation of ampholytes from sample	153
Toxicity of ampholines	153

Chemical and physical properties of ampholines®	154
Choice of ampholine range	155
Concentration of ampholines	156
Isoelectric focusing equipment	157
Physical description of LKB focusing column	157
Modification of LKB column for post-pH equilibrium loading of sample	159
Microanalytical isoelectric focusing	160
Density gradient	161
Electrode solutions	166
Preparation of density gradient	166
Generation of pH gradient	168
Choice of polarity	168
Voltage requirements	168
Focusing	170
Loading of sample	170
Elution of column, measurement of pH values and cell density	171
Cell pI and experimental conditions	173
Isoelectric focusing of viruses	175
Isoelectric characteristics of cells	179
Cell pI and the ionisable groups of the cell surface*	181
Characterisation of ionisable groups	182
Hartley-Roe treatment of isoelectric points	184
Characterisation of ionisable groups by chemical modification	185
Calculation of surface charge from isoelectric data	190
Equation for surface charge of a large particle	190
The evaluation of potential P from isoelectric data	192
Calculation of electrophoretic mobility from isoelectric data	194
Relationship between EPM and charge density derived from isoelectric data	194
Calculation of EPM from isoelectric data	195
Surface charge densities of some cell lines calculated from isoelectric data	198
Estimation of ionisable groups on the surface of <i>Escherichia</i> coli cells	201
Estimation of carboxyl and amino groups	201
Estimation of thiol groups	203
Assay of antigen-antibody interactions at the cell surface	204
Effects of antibody binding on cell pI	205

Estimation of antibody binding	206
Surface antigens on SV-3T3 and polyoma virus-trans- formed 3T3 (Py-3T3) cells and their characterisation	207
Estimation of concanavalin A receptors	211
Effects of Con A binding on cell surface negativity	213
Quantitation of Con A binding by isoelectric equilibrium method	217
Quantitation of Con A binding from saturation concen- tration and molecular weight of Con A	218
Con A receptors on 3T3 and SV-3T3 cells	219
Cell surface changes and tumour progression	222
Monitoring of laboratory cell lines by isoelectric focusing	227
Interaction of drugs with cell surface	228
Effects of polyionic compounds and chondroitin sulphate on surface charge	229
Effects of histones on behaviour of hamster kidney cells	229
Effects of 4-hydroxyanisole on cell behaviour	231
Isoelectric behaviour of subcellular organelles	232
Mitochondria and lysosomes	232
Ribosomes	232
The isoelectric zone	234

6. Partition of Cells in Aqueous Two Phase Systems

Principle of phase partition	236
Counter current distribution	239
Separation of biopolymers and cell particles by CCD	242
Partition behaviour and isoelectric point	243
Partition behaviour of erythrocytes	244
Surface changes in cell cycle	246
Partition behaviour of differentiating cells	248
Drug interactions with the cell surface	249
Zone characterised by phase partition method	252
Epilogue	253
BIBLIOGRAPHY	255
SUBJECT INDEX	287

1. Membrane Structure and Organisation

INTRODUCTION

Cellular membranes perform several functions essential to the life of the cell, and account for 80% of the dry weight of a cell (O'Brien, 1967). Membranes may be subdivided into three groups, namely the plasma membrane, the cytoplasmic and the organelle membranes. The plasma membrane forms the interface between the cell and its environment and maintains the structural integrity of the cell as a stable but dynamic unit and acts as a complex control system for the passage of water, electrolyte ions and other materials required for the metabolic activity of the cell. The plasma membrane also serves as a link in the communication of environmental information to the cell and controls cell division, growth and metabolism. In addition, it plays a significant role in differentiation and morphogenesis, and in cell recognition and antigenicity. Most of these functions are mediated by the macromolecular components of the membrane. Characterisation of cell membrane components and elucidation of their topographical distribution and organisation have therefore formed a major part of research in membrane biology. This area of research is so vast and the growth of the literature so rapid that it would be too ambitious to attempt to survey the whole field. This book is therefore restricted to the discussion of biophysical data, especially bioelectric and electrokinetic, relating to the cell membrane. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a brief description of the salient features of the structure and organisation of the membrane, in order to put the discussions in subsequent chapters in proper perspective. An exhaustive and complete discussion of this subject may be found in the recent reviews by Nicolson (1974a,b, 1975, 1976a,b).

MEMBRANE STRUCTURE

LIPID BILAYER STRUCTURE

Overton (1895) first suggested that membranes were composed of lipids. This was based on the readiness with which lipid-soluble substances penetrated the plasma membrane of the cell. In 1927 Gorter and Grendel extracted lipids from erythrocyte membranes. When these lipids were spread as a monolayer at an air-water interface, they covered an area twice as much as the erythrocyte surface area. This observation led to the postulation of the lipid bilayer. But the surface tension of the cell membrane is much lower than if the membrane had consisted of the lipid bilayer alone. Thus from considerations of surface tension, permeability characteristics and electrical conductivity measurements, Danielli and Davson (1935) deduced that the lipid bilayer is coated on both sides by proteins. The structure of unimolecular films of phospholipids and cholesterol at air-water interface indicated that these lipids were orientated in such a way that their polar groups projected into the aqueous phase. Therefore the lipid bilayer was visualised as a bimolecular leaflet with its non-polar fatty acyl chains orientated inwards perpendicular to the membrane surface. The polar groups of phospholipids were postulated to occur at the external surface, coated in addition by proteins and polysaccharides. This was the early concept of membrane structure generally accepted as the "sandwich" or "unit" model (Robertson, 1959; Davson and Danielli, 1952).

MICELLAR STRUCTURE

Alternative proposals for membrane structure include the globular or hexagonal micelle structure. Electron microscopy has revealed globular or hexagonal micelles in some membrane systems (Sjorstrand, 1963a,b,c; Lucy and Glauert, 1964). Sjorstrand described globular components of approximately 50 Å diameter in membranes from mouse kidney cells, and proposed that membranes may be composed of these globular units with protein molecules between them. This possibility was supported by the earlier finding of Fernandez-Moran (1957) and by subsequent work of Gent *et al.* (1964), Robertson (1963) and Blasie *et al.* (1965). Lucy and Glauert (1964) suggested, on the basis of their work on artificial lipid mixtures, that penta- or hexagonal micelles of lecithin and cholesterol occurred in plasma membranes. Pores existed between the lipid micelles. Proteins, of course, were postulated to occur as a layer on the surface.