

**Neurobiology:  
Molecular Biological  
Approaches to Understanding  
Neuronal Function  
and Development**

**Editor  
Paul O'Lague**

# **NEUROBIOLOGY: Molecular Biological Approaches to Understanding Neuronal Function and Development**

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**Editor**

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## Preface

One of the fastest growing areas of modern biology is the molecular biology of gene structure and function. This growth has its origins in techniques that now allow isolation, duplication, and amplification of genetic information and fairly rapid sequencing of long DNA stretches. The amount of information accrued with the help of these techniques over the last five years is nothing short of staggering. On the other hand, one of the last areas likely to be unravelled is that associated with uncovering molecular rules governing the development and organization of neurons into hierarchical synaptic networks responsible for mediating animal behavior and its modification with experience. Topics encompassing both these areas were the focus of a UCLA Symposium held in Keystone, Colorado in April of 1984. This meeting brought together an international group of neurobiologists and molecular biologists, all of whom willingly participated in informal exchange of information. From the intensity of exchange, we felt the meeting was a great success.

The papers in this volume are representative of the many topics discussed at the meeting, which included cytoskeletal architecture, receptors and growth factors, gene expression and multigene families, membrane channels, intracellular messengers, neuropeptides and transmitter plasticity, and organizational principles in the development of neuronal networks. The present volume is divided into four sections. The first contains papers on cell adhesion, intercellular and virus-cell interactions in the nervous system. Recent observations are presented on how migratory and adhesive properties govern the formation of peripheral ganglia, on transsynaptic regulation of extracellular matrix components, and on how synaptic interactions affect retinotectal maps. This section concludes with an important paper on viruses and the nervous system in which recent autoradiographic techniques of general interest to both molecular biologists and neurobiologists are presented. The second section has articles dealing with recent observations on cytoskeletal architecture. This highly focused section contains papers describing the use of monoclonal antibodies directed against specific cytoskeletal proteins, in situ hybridization techniques for the mRNA of cytoskeletal elements, evidence for membrane-cytoskeletal protein interactions, and regulation of neuronal cytoskeletal networks. The third section consists of papers on neuropeptides and growth factors and describes recent biochemical observations on neuropeptide regulation and growth factor functions. In addition, the papers give a glimpse at how the most up-to-date molecular biological techniques such as, for example, in situ hybridization, cDNA cloning, use of synthetic oligonucleotide probes, and DNA sequencing is being brought to bear on problems of brain chemistry. The fourth section concludes the volume with papers on intracellular messengers and ion channels. Problems dealt with here include molecular

characteristics and functional reconstitution of excitable channels, electrophysiology of single channels, and phospholipid/ $\text{Ca}^{++}$ -dependent protein phosphorylation. The final paper in this section summarizes new molecular biological studies on calmodulin gene cloning, genes of great interest to neurobiologists because of their role in neuronal functioning. This volume should be useful for anyone interested in learning about some new directions in the study of the nervous system.

The program of this symposium was created with the advice and active participation of an Advisory Committee consisting of Richard Horn, Jim Patrick, Lewis Reichardt, Richard Scheller, and Greg Sutcliffe. After deliberations by phone, we met at the Jerry Lewis Neuromuscular Research Center for a day of lively discussion in which the final details of program organization were thrashed out. After having made difficult decisions as to who should be invited, we then were faced with finding resources to help them come. Major gifts from Johnson and Johnson, McNeil Pharmaceutical Company, Sandoz, Ltd., E.I. du Pont de Nemours & Company, and Hoffman-La Roche, Inc. provided supplementary funding for travel and subsistence support for those invited meeting participants. All of us who attended are particularly grateful to Betty Handy for her efforts at the meeting which assured smooth operations, and to Sandy Malone and Hank Harwood whose work prior to the meeting made my part in it a pleasure rather than a chore.

Finally, I would like to thank Lynn Ianni, who coordinated editorial review by the Journal of Cellular Biochemistry for many of these articles, and who contributed the eleventh hour energy which helped close out this volume.

**Paul O'Laigue**

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## Evidence for Transsynaptic Regulation of Neuronal Cell Surface Heparan Sulfate Proteoglycan in Developing Rat Superior Cervical Ganglion

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The effect of neonatal deafferentation on the expression of a neuronal cell surface heparan sulfate proteoglycan (HeS-PG) was investigated in the developing rat superior cervical ganglion. Two monoclonal antibodies, one directed against the core protein of HeS-PG, and one to a determinant associated with a heparan sulfate side-chain, were used to monitor postnatal increases of HeS-PG by radioimmunoassay. Following neonatal deafferentation by section of the cervical sympathetic trunk, total protein per ganglion was slightly reduced at survival times of 7, 14, and 30 days. Expression of the core protein determinant on HeS-PG was not altered in deafferented ganglia. In contrast, levels of side-chain determinant were significantly reduced at 14 and 30 days. These results suggest that processing of HeS-PG side-chains by principal ganglionic neurons is partially regulated by transsynaptic influences during development. Transsynaptic regulation of neuronal development may be a more general process than was believed previously, with effects not limited to molecules associated with synaptic development.

**Key words:** radioimmunoassay, superior cervical ganglion, heparan sulfate, transsynaptic regulation

The rat superior cervical ganglion (SCG) has been used as a model system for studies of normal development and of the role of innervation in the regulation of development. Biochemical maturation of ganglionic neurons has been carried out by assay of tyrosine hydroxylase (TH), the rate-limiting enzyme in catecholamine biosynthesis [1,2]. Estimates of the progress of synaptogenesis by cholinergic preganglionic neurons have been carried out by assay of choline acetyltransferase (CAT) [1,3,4]. Morphological assessment of principal ganglionic neurons and of developing synapses has been carried out by electron microscopic analysis [1,5,6]. These studies have shown that the SCG completes its development postnatally, with increases in TH levels [1], and increases in ganglionic cell size. Recognizable synapses are rare in the SCG in neonatal animals, with synaptogenesis occurring most rapidly during the first two postnatal weeks [1,3,6].

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Because of the ease of manipulation of its presynaptic input, the SCG has been used as a model in which to study transsynaptic effects of presynaptic input. Section of the cervical sympathetic trunk (CST) in neonatal rats affects both the pattern of neuronal maturation and that of synaptogenesis [1-3,6-8]. Isolation of the SCG from developing presynaptic input at birth results in reduction in the postnatal increase in TH levels and reduces cell division and growth [1-3]. The development of postsynaptic specializations associated with synaptogenesis also does not occur [6]. Since denervation can be mimicked by treatment with ganglionic blockers such as chlorisondamine and pempidine [4], it has been hypothesized that presynaptic input exerts its developmental effects via direct synaptic activity. However, additional trophic influences may contribute to postsynaptic changes associated with denervation [9].

If reinnervation is permitted, up to 50% of normal levels of synapses can be recovered by 60 days [8]. However, TH levels do not recover [10]. In an apparent paradoxical result, assay by high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) of catecholamine levels present in both deafferented and reinnervated ganglia do not differ from those measured in control ganglia [10]. Thus, despite persisting reductions in TH levels, catecholamine pools remain at control levels.

Recently, monoclonal antibodies have been used to monitor the development of a neuronal cell surface heparan sulfate proteoglycan (HeS-PG) in the SCG [11]. Antibodies directed against two different determinants on HeS-PG, one associated with the core protein and one with a heparan sulfate side chain, were used to assess neuronal maturation. Quantitation of antigen levels by radioimmunoassay (RIA) indicated that these antigens increased significantly during postnatal development, with the most dramatic increases occurring during the second postnatal week. No significant redistribution of antigen associated with development was observed. These antigens were of interest because of the association of HeS-PG with a factor that induces neurite outgrowth *in vitro* [12,13]. The antigen can be used as a marker for neuronal surface to monitor neurite outgrowth and increases in cell diameter. Alterations in expression may be associated with the regulation of neurite outgrowth.

Because HeS-PG may represent a molecule associated with more general characteristics of development than neurotransmitter synthetic enzymes, we were interested in examining whether the expression of determinants on both core protein and side chains is regulated by presynaptic input. If the levels of these molecules are also reduced by neonatal deafferentation, it may be possible to conclude that transsynaptic regulation of development is a factor not limited to the control of molecules directly associated with synaptic transmission. A preliminary report of a portion of this work has been published [14].

## METHODS

### Reagents

Monoclonal antibodies directed against HeS-PG were obtained from Drs. L.F. Reichardt and W.D. Matthew. Monoclonal antibody PG 3 recognizes an antigenic determinant associated with a heparan sulfate side chain, and PG 22 recognizes the core protein or an N-linked carbohydrate associated with it. These antibodies were used either diluted directly from culture supernatants or from ammonium sulfate precipitations of ascites fluid. Previous studies have indicated that no differences in



the properties of antibodies derived from these sources can be observed [11].  $^{125}\text{I}$ -goat-anti-mouse-IgG (Fab' fragment) or  $^{125}\text{I}$ -sheep-anti-mouse-IgG (whole molecule) were obtained from Amersham.

### Experimental Animals and Surgical Procedures

Sprague-Dawley rats were used throughout for these experiments. For neonatal section of the CST, published procedures were followed [6,8]. Litters of pups aged 1–4 days were removed from their mothers. The sex of each pup was determined and equal numbers of males and females were selected for experimental and control groups. Since unilateral deafferentation of the SCG can cause compensatory changes in the contralateral ganglion (Smolen, personal communication), all surgery was carried out bilaterally. Control rats were littermates of experimental animals in all cases. Experimental animals were anesthetized with methoxyfluorane in air. The skin over the throat was opened and the carotid artery was visualized. The SCG was located beneath the carotid artery and the CST severed at the base of the ganglion. A 2–3-mm section of the CST was removed to prevent reinnervation. Section of the CST was carried out bilaterally. The skin was sealed with collodion dissolved in acetone. Pups were kept warm until wide-awake and were returned as a group, along with control animals, to their mother. Mortality was less than 20% for 7-day survival periods, with somewhat poorer survival rates with longer survival periods.

Surgery on adult female rats was carried out using chloral hydrate (35 mg/kg, 7% solution) as anesthetic. Bilateral section of the CST was carried out in a similar fashion. The fascia surrounding the salivary glands and the overlying skin were sutured separately using 4-0 silk. Rats were given intramuscular injections of 100,000 units of Bicillin to reduce postsurgical respiratory infections. Mortality was less than 5% using prophylactic doses of antibiotic.

### Quantitation of Antigen

Assay of antigen levels was carried out according to previously developed methods [11]. Ganglia from experimental animals were pooled to provide sufficient tissue for assay. Control ganglia were treated similarly. Desheathed ganglia were homogenized in 5 mM Tris-HCl, pH 8.1, in the presence of a protease inhibitor, phenylmethylsulfonylfluoride. Protein levels were determined by Amido-Schwarz assay. The total protein per ganglion was determined by correcting this value for total volume of homogenate and the number of ganglia pooled. Twelve dilutions of whole tissue homogenate were prepared (from 1:1 to 1:10,000) and aliquots were incubated with equal volumes of antibody at limiting dilution. After 18–24 hr, bound antibody was precipitated by centrifugation at 100,000g in an Airfuge. The amount of antibody remaining in the supernatant was determined by a standard solid-phase RIA [15], using a crude preparation of rat brain synaptosomes as the antigen. 50% inhibition points (I-50) were determined graphically, and standardized to 4 mg/ml initial concentration of protein. These values were further corrected for variations in protein content per ganglion, to permit comparison between experimental and control groups at each age examined, according to  $\text{I-50 (corrected)} = \text{I-50} \times [\text{total protein (control ganglia)} / \text{total protein (experimental ganglia)}]$ . Control results were standardized to a value of 1.0; results from experimental groups were calculated as antigen levels relative to control levels (relative specific activity, RSA). All homogenates were assayed at least twice.