

Chronobiology

1982-1983

E. Haus H. Kabat

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Preface

Chronobiology, the study of biologic time structure, is a new applied and basic science that is becoming internationally recognized and which is revealed as a fledgling discipline in transition. The facts presented in this volume indeed reflect the continued rapid development of this discipline with its own tools, methods, concepts and broad areas of application, exploiting a spectrum of rhythms with different frequencies. The inferential statistical analysis of rhythms, based on modern computer methods, has been shown to be an indispensable tool of many basic and applied chronobiologists. With such tools available, however, it is simpler and more efficient to extend the focus from the study of ultradian and circadian rhythms to the field of infradians with a frequency lower than 1 cycle in 28 h.

Notable exceptions notwithstanding, most research in clinical chronobiology has relied primarily or exclusively on traditional techniques for measuring blood pressure, heart rate and temperature, among other variables. However, reports based on automatic monitoring have begun to complement self-measurement for rhythm assessment, notably in chronopharmacology. The critical importance for chronobiology of automated data collection and data transfer have come clearly to the fore.

The importance of rhythms with several frequencies is best emphasized by the fact that many have been shown to account for the difference between life and death in response to the same agent, and even for the difference between an acceleration and retardation of cancerous growth as a function of timing. Certainly, a large difference in human toxicity of anticancer drugs has already been documented. Some of the rhythms with several frequencies, summarized in this book, are pertinent to the treatment of cancer. Host tolerance of toxic drugs undergoes about-weekly, about-monthly and about-yearly, as well as about-daily rhythms.

Marker rhythm characteristics were introduced at the XVth International Conference of the International Society for Chronobiology, (held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, September 8-11, 1981) for the dual purpose of monitoring optimal times for treatment and for gauging its effects in cancer patients. Thus, today, one can tentatively suggest that for diurnally-active, nocturnally-resting subjects, the optimal (population-based) time to administer doxorubicin, based on endpoints is related to several marker rhythm variables. In clock-hours this occurs between 0145 and 0400, as judged by the depressed area (within the month following treatment) of the total leu-

kocyte count when the acrophase of this count, or that of neutrophils, platelets or urinary potassium excretion is used as reference. The corresponding gain (computed as excess toxicity resulting from treatment at the inopportune, instead of the optimal time) exceeds 28% in each case. Moreover, one can specify the best timing for the individual, i.e., doxorubicin treatment at ~9.5 h after the acrophase of the total leukocyte count, is the primary consideration if avoiding myelotoxicity. When cardiotoxicity is to be avoided, the tentative best treatment time is around 22 h after the heart rate acrophase. While this heart rate acrophase can be determined from self-measurements of pulse rate, denser data with much less interference, notably without interrupting sleep, is obtained when heart rate is monitored automatically. Moreover, data punching prior to analysis can thus be eliminated. Direct as-one-goes data storage on a floppy disk, allowing heart rate data to be transferred rapidly from the automatic recorder to a personal computer has been accomplished in the home of a patient with breast cancer, using a Nippon Colin (Komaki, Japan) monitor. Nevertheless, chronobiologic engineering for the cost-effective use of clinical and biochemical variables still has a long way to go; it will require the wedding of hardware and software for applications in clinical chronobiology to open new avenues for the prevention and treatment of major life-threatening and incapacitating diseases.

Chronobiology's major goals have not yet been reached; its rewards depend on chronobiologic engineering. This endeavor promises rewards even greater than those of genetic engineering, an optimistic view that stems from the ubiquity of rhythms with both genetic and environmental components. Genetic engineering can do something about the gene; chronobiology can address both the gene and the environment. By timing, work on basic problems becomes chronomolecular engineering.

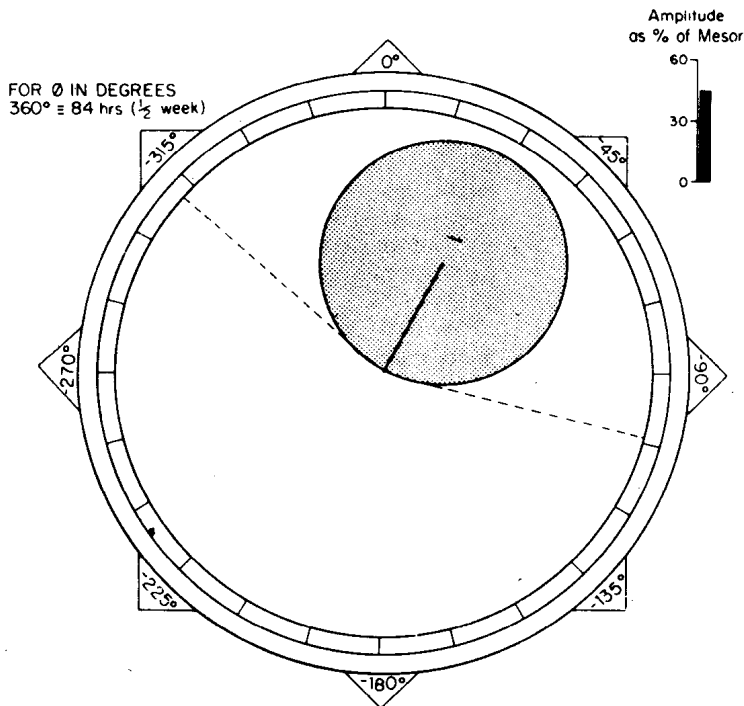
Health can be gauged by quantifying rhythms. Rhythm parameters provide new endpoints for the definition of health and the recognition of disease. Chronobiologic methods also serve as a basis for recognizing risk and screening for disease, as well as adding timing to treatment dosage schedules. For the current treatment of cancer, however, a major immediate promise of chronobiologic technology lies in implantable programmable pumps with optimization by timing taken into account.

It is also important to realize that sources of major diseases of our civilization may be as-

essed, perhaps many decades before they occur, for states of heightened risk. Cost effective preventive medicine must endeavor to test, as early as possible, for the risk of various cancers, high blood pressure related diseases, and also chemical dependency, emotional depression and other conditions. Today, newborns are tested routinely, but only for relatively infrequently recurring conditions. If the results obtained in chronoepidemiologic studies can be validated in younger individuals (followed as a group), a predictive test, very early in life, for a heightened risk of developing a given condition can be applied to single out those individuals who may require preventive therapy, when such measures are available. When, as in the case of breast cancer, such measures are not yet known, the hormonal changes associated with heightened risk may point the way to a rational basis for developing novel preventive measures. In any event, individualization with time-specification of a measure allows one to dispense with the obligation to apply all preventive measures on a mass basis; instead, one can individualize them by rhythmometric criteria. Chronobiologic research provides such criteria as time-specified reference intervals for the clinical laboratory, which make the interpretation of any single laboratory determination on rhythmic variables more meaningful and cost effective.

From the viewpoint of basic biology, as well as in clinical perspective, focus is being redirected toward circaseptan (about 7-day) rhythms that have no known approximate match, i.e., no obviously prominent environmental counterpart. Reference is made in the book to the temperature compensation of the circaseptan period in a poikilotherm. Circaseptan organization has led us to postulate the process of an internal evolution as a basis for biological time structure. The latter is not merely a result of periodicities impinging on us from our environment. Evolution in the internal environment depended upon feed-side-wards in networks, which usually substitute for (oversimplified) feedbacks along axes. Apart from the evolutionary biologist's interest in circaseptan and circasemiseptan rhythms, however, the clinician can no longer question the importance of circaseptan rhythms; these rhythms are a determinant of sudden death (fig. 1).

Many of the chapters in this book add to the store of valuable chronobiologic facts. The new data represent an indispensable store of information for biologists dealing with corresponding time-varying functions. More and more endeavors will have to turn to the use of p -values



SINGLE COSINOR

P	No Obs	Percent Rhythm	Amplitude, % of mesor [†]	Acrophase, degrees [‡]
0.05	14	41	44 (118, 87)	-28 (-311, -105)

P = probability of hypothesis: amplitude = 0; No Obs = number of observations; Percent Rhythm = percentage of variability accounted for by cosine curve; 94% CL = 94% confidence limits derived from cosinor ellipse.

[†]mesor = 100%

[‡]from midnight Sunday to Monday (= 0°)

FIGURE 1. About 3.5-day (circasemiseptan) rhythmic feature of sudden human death. Original data by Rabkin et al (3) who examined records of 3,983 men for sudden cardiac deaths. Sixty-three deaths occurred in the absence of information on previous ischemic heart disease (IHD), 89 in the presence of IHD. For the 63 deaths without IHD and for the total of sudden cardiac death, the original authors established differences by X^2 with a $p < .01$; they comment on the excess of sudden cardiac death on Monday. Myers and Devar (2) comment in turn on the role of a large consumption of alcohol on Saturdays. In Rabkin et al.'s data (3) a second peak on Thursdays is apparent to the naked eye. The frequency multiplication (doubling) of an internal circasemiseptan rhythm which is merely synchronized by the burden of returning to work on Mondays and influenced by other factors is a reasonable working hypothesis. Note that the best-fitting period is of 84 h (1/2 week) rather than 168 h (1 week) length. We are dealing with a frequency-doubled (circasemiseptan) change. This rhythm is apparent from the fact that the 95% confidence ellipse from the fitting of an 84-h cosine curve does not cover the center (pole) of the cosinor plot. This result of analysis is in keeping with much evidence on the ubiquity of circasemiseptan rhythms, their free-running in man, their relative temperature compensation in the springtail (discussed in this volume) and their frequency multiplication, e.g., in a fatal case of cardiac arrhythmia, studied after a triple coronary bypass operation (1). Apparently 7-day-synchronized circasemiseptan-rhythmic mortality has also been documented, by autocorrelations, for homicides, motor- and non-motor-vehicle accidents and suicides (4). p = probability of hypothesis; amplitude = 0; no obs = number of observations; percent rhythm = percentage of variability accounted for by cosine curve; 95% CL = 95% confidence limits derived from cosinor ellipse. [†] = mesor = 100%; [‡] from midnight Sunday to Monday (= 0°).

to ascertain the likelihood of intended or other changes in rhythm characteristics of the given individual (rather than merely for distinguishing some groups under investigation).

The introduction to an earlier volume concluded with a hint of the need for measuring what is measurable and rendering measurable that which as yet is not. The biologist's and the physician's "meaningful" in 1984 includes a temporal perspective based on a growing number of facts.

Franz Halberg

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Contents

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Preface

1. Temperature Effect on Infradian Oviposition Rhythms in the Springtail, *Folsomia candida* (Willem) 1
LK Cutkomp, F Halberg and G Cornelissen
2. Chronophysiology: Study of a discrepancy? 10
WJ Rietveld
3. Chronobiological Changes in the LH-RH Content of the Median Eminence and Arcuate Area at Puberty 14
WJ Rietveld, E Marani, AJ Jenner, J de Koning, AKP Feirabend and ME Boon
4. Circadian Fluctuations in Neurotransmitter Content of the Rat Hypothalamus 17
WJ Rietveld, CFM van Valkenburg, E Marani and M Kooij
5. Variations in Size and Glycogen Content of Exfoliating Epithelial Cells at Different Times of the Day 22
WJ Rietveld and ME Boon
6. Influence of Cooling of the Hypothalamus on Circadian Rhythm of Oxygen Uptake and Blood Variables of Chequered Watersnake, *Natrix piscator* 25
S Sharan, JP Thapliyal and AK Pati
7. Comparisons of Circadian Rhythmic Parameters from Nineteen Liver or Brain Enzymes of Two Strains of Mice ... 31
RJ Feuers, LE Scheving and RR Delongchamp
8. Circadian Changes in the Osteogenic Competence of Marrow Stromal Cells 37
DJ Simmonds, K Loeffelman, C Frier, R McCoy, B Friedman, S Melville and AJ Kahn
9. Seasonal Variation in the Effect of Thermal Stimulation on Reproduction in Two Species of *Fundulus* 43
AJ Fivizzani and DA Porter
10. Mesor Elevation in Circadian Rhythm in Estrogen Receptor Activity in the Uterus of BDF₁ Female Mice Carrying an MXT 3.2 Transplantable Breast Cancer ... 49
D Lakatua, E Haus, H Berg and L Sackett-Lundeen
11. Circadian Rhythm of Core Temperature, Blood Pressure and Heart Rate in Hypothyroid and Normal Rats 55
P De Remigis, P Cugini, F Halberg, S Sensi and D Scavo
12. Circadian Rhythm of Serum Prolactin in Hypothyroid, Hyperthyroid and Healthy Subjects 60
P De Remigis, L Vianale, A Bonaduce, M D'Angelo, F Capani and S Sensi

13. Complex Demodulation—Technique and Application 63
HC Sing, FW Hegge and DP Redmond
14. Development of Mathematical Techniques to Describe Chronophysiological Rhythms in Man During Temporal Isolation 73
J Fookson, ED Weitzman, CA Czeisler, J Zimmerman and J Ronda
15. Rhythm Analysis in Linear Multifrequency Models 83
BJ Arbogast
16. Serial Section Analysis of Exogenous Influences on Overt Rhythms in Rapid Shift Rotation 92
Z Vokac, P Magnus, E Jebens and N Gundersen
17. Chronobiological Serial Section Analysis with a Pocket Calculator 98
M Vokac
18. A Mathematical Model that Evaluates the Effect of Circadian Rhythms in the Activities of Several Enzymes on Their Average Coefficient of Variation ... 107
RR Delongchamp, RJ Feuers and LE Scheving
19. Time-Optimal Chemotherapeutic Treatment of Tumors: A Computer-Aided Simulation Study 112
W Düchting and Th Vogelsaenger
20. Role of Oscillation in the Formation of Nongenetic Memory in Hormonal Regulation—New Ideas 117
AS Alexandrov, JG Vassileva-Popova and VN Alexandrova
21. Corticosteroid Administration Schedules and Differences in Circadian Behavior of Human Circulating Eosinophils 120
G Cornelissen, C Bingham and F Halberg
22. Imputations Derived From the Single Cosinor and the Chronobiological Serial Section 126
B Arbogast, W Lubanovic, F Halberg, G Cornelissen and C Bingham
23. Phase-response Curve for the Persisting Circadian Rhythm of Cell Division Perturbed by Light Signals in Synchronous Cultures of the Algal Flagellate *Euglena gracilis* (Z) 135
LN Edmunds Jr, DE Tay and DL Laval-Martin
24. Generation Time in Mandibular Condylar Cartilage Cells of Growing Rats 143
A Petrovic and C Oudet
25. Epidermal Growth Inhibitors (Chalones) Show Circadian Stage Dependent Effects on Cell Cycle Progression in Mice . 150
OPF Clausen and K Elgjo
26. Genetic Variation in a Circadian Rhythm in Mouse Thymus 155
L Peleg, MN Nesbitt and IE Ashkenazi
27. Circadian Rhythm in Number of Erythroid and Granulocytic Colony Forming Units in Culture (ECFU-C and GCFU-C) in Bone Marrow of BDF₁ Male Mice . 160
P Bartlett, E Haus, T Tuason, L Sackett-Lundeen and D Lakatua
28. Synchronization of Circadian Rhythms in Tumor Bearing CDF₁ Mice 165
M White, E Haus, L Sackett-Lundeen and D Lakatua
29. Circadian Rhythm in Triiodothyronine (T₃) Receptor Affinity in Liver Cell Nuclei of CD₂F₁ Mice 173
D Lakatua, E Haus, H Berg and L Sackett-Lundeen
30. Circadian Rhythm in Spontaneous ³H-Thymidine Uptake and in PHA Response of Splenic Cells of BDF₁ Male Mice *In Vitro*. Phase Relations to Hematologic Rhythms *In Vivo* 178
E Haus, L Taddeini, K Larson, P Bartlett and L Sackett-Lundeen
31. The Relationship Between Cortisol and Melatonin Serum Levels in Patients with Affective Disorders and in Healthy Subjects 183
L Wetterberg, B Aperia, J Beck-Friis, BF Kjellman, J-G Ljunggren, Å Nilsson, U Pettersson, A Tham and F Undén
32. Do We Need a Multioscillator Model of Circadian Rhythms in Human Performance? 185
S Folkard and TH Monk
33. Effects of Moderate Physical Work on Chronopsychological Variables During Sustained Performance 192
C Englund, P Naitoh and D Ryman
34. Chronobiologic Consequences of Various Shiftwork Schedules 200
AL Cahill and CF Ehret
35. Circadian Rhythms in Performance, Oral Temperature, Blood Pressure, Fusion Critical Frequency of Retinal Vision After East- and Westward Transmeridian Flights 207
S Sensi, F Capani, T Guagnano, M Iezzi and D Modugno
36. Analysis of Directional Asymmetry Following Transmeridian Flight for Objective (East-West) and Subjective (Outgoing-Homecoming) Factors 210
T Sasaki, S Tsuzuki and R Koga

37. Urinary Electrolyte and Trace Elements Rhythm in "Examination Stress." A Chronobiological Study	215
RD Bhattacharya, TS Patel and CB Pandya	
38. Comparative Studies of Emotional Circadian Parameters in Different Strains of Mice. Chronobiologic and Psychophysiological Approach	222
C Poirel, M Poirel and O Hengartner	
39. Duality of Pain Demonstrated by the Circadian Variation in Tooth Sensitivity	225
L Pöllmann	
40. Cumulative Effects of Repeated Daytime Awakenings, Multiple Stage 1 Sleep Episodes and Scheduled Afternoon Napping on Alert Behaviors	229
JM Taub	
41. Circadian and Circaseptan Rhythmicities in Corticosteroid-binding Globulin (CBG) Binding Activity of Human Milk	234
F Agrimonti, R Frairia, D Fornaro, M Torta, G Borretta, G Trapani, E Bertino and A Angeli	
42. Circannual Rhythmicities of Cortisol Levels in the Peripheral Plasma of Healthy Subjects	239
F Agrimonti, A Angeli, R Frairia, A Fazzari, C Tamagnone, D Fornaro and F Ceresa	
43. Circannual Variation in the Timing of Eosinophil Circadian Rhythm in Snakes	245
AK Pati and JP Thapliyal	
44. The Fiddler Crab: A Model for the Study of the Internal Desynchronization of Circadian Rhythms	250
FH Barnwell and KC Zinnel	
45. Circaseptan Rhythms in Clinically Healthy Subjects	257
K Uezono, E Haus, J Swoyer and T Kawasaki	
46. The Time Structure of Adaptation	263
G Hildebrandt	
47. Circadian Variations in Circulatory Response to Thermal Stimuli	268
P Engel and M Heller	
48. Light-Dark Synchronization of the Circadian Drinking Rhythm of Owl Monkeys (<i>Aotus trivirgatus</i>)	271
TM Hoban and FM Sulzman	
49. Studies on Circadian Rhythm of Breast Milk and Plasma Calcium in Lactating Indian Women	275
RK Singh and VK Nakra	
50. Diurnal Variation in Plasma Calcium Concentration	278
RK Singh and VK Nakra	
51. Cardiocirculatory Variations in a Normal Life Schedule Measured at Rest, During a Time Period of 9 Months	281
P Vogelaere and FD Meyer	
52. Changes in Purine Cyclic Nucleotides and Cytidine 3',5'-monophosphate Radioimmunoreactive Material in the Urine of Normal Subjects	291
JE Stone, LE Scheving and ML Polk	
53. Circadian Rhythms of Calcium, Magnesium and Phosphorous Excretion Through Saliva and Urine in Pregnancy and Puerperium	299
NL Aslanian, GG Okoev, DZ Grigorian and JS Harutiounian	
54. Circannual Aspects of Urinary Catecholamine Excretion in a Healthy Man	308
RB Sothorn, CS Leach and F Halberg	
55. Chronomorphologic Changes in the Hypothalamus of Rats at Puberty	315
WJ Rietveld, E Marani and ME Boon	
56. Human Aging and Rhythms	319
P Cugini, F Halberg, A Schramm, E Haus, D Lakatua, LE Scheving and D Scavo	
57. Loss of Circannual Rhythmicity For Circulating Aldosterone in Aged Mesorhypertensives	325
P Cugini, E Salandi and D Scavo	
58. Sleep-wakefulness, Biorhythmic and Activity Patterns of Elderly Residents in a Self-care Facility	331
C Toderò, I Gibson and J Boosinger	
59. Circadian Rhythm of Corticosterone, Prolactin and Thyroid Hormones in Serum and Endocrine Glands of Post-hatch Chicks, Incubated at Different Temperatures	336
ER Kühn, E Decuypere, LM Colen, A Chadwick, W Heyns and H Michels	
60. Aging and Biological Rhythms: Complaints of Insomnia in the Elderly	345
RS Rosenberg	
61. Pigment and Total Protein of <i>Abutilon Theophrasti</i> Leaves in Relation to Age and Circadian Leaf Movements	350
JL Tate and WL Koukkari	
62. Effect of Atropine on the Circadian Prolactin Responses to Insulin-induced Hypoglycemia in Normal Men	356
RS Nathan, MA Tabrizi, FS Halpern and EJ Sachar	
63. Rate Limiting Steps in the Temporal Variations of the Pharmacokinetics of Some Selected Drugs	359
P-M Bélanger, G Labrecque and F Doré	