



# The Structure and Function of MUSCLE

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Volume II  
BIOCHEMISTRY AND  
PHYSIOLOGY



1960

ACADEMIC PRESS  
NEW YORK AND LONDON

ACADEMIC PRESS INC.  
111 FIFTH AVENUE  
NEW YORK 3, NEW YORK

U.K. Edition, Published by  
ACADEMIC PRESS INC. (LONDON) LTD.  
17, OLD QUEEN STREET  
LONDON, S.W.1

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FROM THE PUBLISHERS

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 60-8850

Printed in The Netherlands by  
JOH. ENSCHEDÉ EN ZONEN GRAFISCHE INRICHTING N.V.

The  
Structure and Function of  
**MUSCLE**

Volume II

**Volume I: Structure**

**Volume II: Biochemistry and Physiology**

**Volume III: Pharmacology and Disease**

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## PREFACE

In this volume we deal mainly with the functional rather than the structural aspects of muscle. However these two aspects are indissoluble. Those who have perused Volume I will have noted a constant referral of structure to function and in this volume a referral of function to structure will be noted. Dr. Andrew Szent-Györgyi's initial chapter in fact deals with the nature of the actual structural units of muscle—the proteins. In the other chapters the detailed biochemical activity of structures particularized in Volume I is given. Physiological aspects of muscle action and functioning of muscle as part of an integrated organism mediated by the central nervous system and the endocrines and affected by temperature, fatigue, and training all find a place within the pages of Volume II.

This particular volume will be of special interest to biochemists and physiologists and also to neurologists, pathologists, cardiologists, and others concerned with neuromuscular disease in humans and animals, since it provides the norms from which muscular action deviates in pathological conditions.

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Atlanta, Georgia  
February, 1960*

## CONTENTS OF VOLUME I

- I. *The Anatomy of Muscles and Their Relation to Movement and Posture*  
by R. D. LOCKHART
- II. *The Microanatomy of Muscle* by E. W. WALLS
- III. *Development of Striated Muscle* by J. D. BOYD
- IV. *Histochemistry of Developing Skeletal and Cardiac Muscle* by E. B.  
BECKETT and G. H. BOURNE
- V. *Skeletal Muscle Tissue in Culture* by MARGARET R. MURRAY
- VI. *The Structure of Striated Muscle As Seen by the Electron Microscope*  
by H. STANLEY BENNETT
- VII. *The Molecular Basis of Contraction in Cross-Striated Muscles* by H. E.  
HUXLEY and J. HANSON
- VIII. *Molecular Structure and Function of Smooth Muscle* by ARPAD CSAPO
- IX. *Structure and Function of the Contractile Apparatus in the Muscles of*  
*Invertebrate Animals* by JEAN HANSON and J. LOWY
- X. *Motor End-Plate Structure* by R. COUTEAUX
- XI. *Muscle Spindles and Other Muscle Receptors* by SYBIL COOPER
- XII. *Intercalated Discs of Heart Muscle* by F. S. SJÖSTRAND and E.  
ANDERSSON-CEDERGREN

AUTHOR INDEX

SUBJECT INDEX



## CONTENTS OF VOLUME III

- I. *Effects of Drugs on Smooth and Striated Muscle* by STEPHEN THESLEFF
- II. *The Effects of Drugs on Myocardial Contractility* by NEIL C. MORAN and MARION DeV. COTTEN
- III. *Virus Infections of Muscle* by E. J. FIELD
- IV. *Parasitic Infections* by P. C. C. GARNHAM
- V. *Muscle Regeneration and Repair* by E. J. FIELD
- VI. *Effects of Nutritional Deficiencies upon Muscle* by KARL E. MASON
- VII. *Aging Changes in Muscle* by L. J. RUBINSTEIN
- VIII. *Post Mortem Changes in Muscle* by J. R. BENDALL
- IX. *Histochemistry of Skeletal Muscle and Changes in some Muscle Diseases* by E. B. BECKETT and G. H. BOURNE
- X. *Myopathy: The Pathological Changes in Intrinsic Diseases of Muscles* by F. D. BOSANQUET, P. N. DANIEL, and H. B. PARRY
- XI. *Clinical Aspects of some Diseases of Muscle* by RONALD A. HENSON
- XII. *Genetic Aspects of Muscular and Neuromuscular Diseases* by JOHN N. WALTON
- XIII. *Remarks on Muscle* by ALBERT SZENT-GYÖRGYI

AUTHOR INDEX

SUBJECT INDEX

# CONTENTS

CONTRIBUTORS TO VOLUME II . . . . .	v
PREFACE TO VOLUME II . . . . .	vii
CONTENTS OF VOLUME I . . . . .	xiii
CONTENTS OF VOLUME III . . . . .	xiv

## CHAPTER I

### Proteins of the Myofibril

ANDREW G. SZENT-GYÖRGYI

I. Introduction . . . . .	1
II. Characterization and Reactions of the Myofibrillar Proteins . . . . .	5
III. Analysis of Fibrous Muscle Proteins . . . . .	34
IV. Polypeptide Chain Configuration of the Fibrous Muscle Proteins . . . . .	43
References . . . . .	49

## CHAPTER II

### Biochemistry of Muscular Action

D. M. NEEDHAM

I. Energy Provision in Muscle . . . . .	55
II. Interaction of Adenosine Triphosphate and Actomyosin as the Basis of Muscle Contraction . . . . .	64
III. Mechanism of the Actomyosin-Adenosine Triphosphate Interaction in Contraction . . . . .	76
IV. Energy Provision in the Living Muscle . . . . .	82
V. Relaxation . . . . .	89
VI. Conclusion . . . . .	95
References . . . . .	100

## CHAPTER III

### Biochemistry of Sarcosomes

E. C. SLATER

I. Introduction . . . . .	105
II. Function of Sarcosomes . . . . .	108
III. Detailed Mechanisms of Energy-Yielding Reactions in Sarcosomes . . . . .	117
IV. Energy-Consuming Reactions in Sarcosomes . . . . .	125
V. Properties of Isolated Sarcosomes . . . . .	125
VI. Structure of Sarcosomes and Localization of Enzymes within the Sarcosomes . . . . .	136
References . . . . .	138

## CHAPTER IV

### Endocrines and Muscle

JANE A. RUSSELL AND ALFRED E. WILHELMI

I. Endocrine Control of Growth and Development . . . . .	142
II. Metabolism and Function . . . . .	151
References . . . . .	192

## CHAPTER V

### The Neuromuscular Junction: Role of the Acetylcholine System

DAVID NACHMANSOHN

I. Introduction . . . . .	199
II. Events in the Axon During Nerve Activity Recorded by Physical Methods . . . . .	200
III. Hypothesis of Neurohumoral Transmission . . . . .	209
IV. Role of Acetylcholine in Conduction . . . . .	213
V. Molecular Forces of the Acetylcholine System and Their Relation to Function . . . . .	232
VI. Neuromuscular Transmission . . . . .	258
VII. Present State of the Problem . . . . .	291
References . . . . .	295

## CHAPTER VI

### Some Aspects of the Biophysics of Muscle

ROBERT W. RAMSEY

I. Introduction . . . . .	303
II. Factors Concerned with Excitation . . . . .	303
III. Mechanics of Muscle . . . . .	327
IV. Heat . . . . .	342
V. A General Analysis of Contraction . . . . .	347
References . . . . .	354

## CHAPTER VII

### Thermodynamics of Muscle

R. J. PODOLSKY

I. Introduction . . . . .	359
II. Symbols . . . . .	360
III. First Law of Thermodynamics: The Energy Balance . . . . .	361
IV. Chemical Kinetics of Muscular Contraction . . . . .	363
V. Models of the Kinematics of Contraction . . . . .	369
VI. The Recovery Process . . . . .	375
VII. Second Law of Thermodynamics: The Free Energy Balance . . . . .	377
VIII. Thermodynamics of Solutions . . . . .	378
IX. Efficiency of Muscular Contraction . . . . .	382
X. Conclusions . . . . .	384
References . . . . .	385

## CHAPTER VIII

### **Comparative Physiology of Activation of Muscles, with Particular Attention to Smooth Muscles**

C. LADD PROSSER

I. Introduction . . . . .	387
II. The Spectrum of Histological Types . . . . .	388
III. All-or-None Contractions . . . . .	389
IV. Frequency-Dependence of Tension . . . . .	390
V. Patterns of Neuromuscular Activation . . . . .	393
VI. Conclusions . . . . .	430
References . . . . .	431

## CHAPTER IX

### **The Physiology of Muscular Exercise**

ROGER G. BANNISTER

I. Introduction . . . . .	435
II. Sprint Running . . . . .	437
III. Middle Distance Running . . . . .	437
IV. Long Distance Running . . . . .	438
V. Conclusions . . . . .	445
References . . . . .	446

## CHAPTER X

### **Part I. Some Effects of Fatigue, Temperature, and Training on Muscular Contraction in Man**

O. G. EDHOLM

Text . . . . .	449
References . . . . .	453

### **Part II. Fatigue of the Working Individual**

E. HOHWÜ CHRISTENSEN

I. Work Load, Capacity for Work, and Fatigue . . . . .	455
II. Anaerobic Work and Fatigue Due to "Intoxication" by Work Products . . . . .	456
III. Fatigue Due to Depletion of Fuel . . . . .	457
IV. Environment and Fatigue . . . . .	459
V. Rest Pauses and Fatigue . . . . .	461
VI. Recreation, Physical Training, and Fatigue . . . . .	462
References . . . . .	464

## CHAPTER XI

### The Control of Muscular Activity by the Central Nervous System

MARION HINES

I. Introduction . . . . .	467
II. Normal Use of Skeletal Muscle by the Primate . . . . .	469
III. Segmental Organization . . . . .	472
IV. Longitudinal Organization . . . . .	475
V. The Motor Cortex . . . . .	485
VI. Posture . . . . .	494
VII. Progression . . . . .	497
VIII. Tone in Skeletal Muscle . . . . .	498
IX. Phasic Movements . . . . .	502
X. Coordinated Movements as Response to Sensory Stimuli . . . . .	503
XI. Spontaneous or Self-Initiated Movements . . . . .	505
XII. Conclusions . . . . .	509
References . . . . .	513

## CHAPTER XII

### Selected Topics on the Physiology of the Heart

W. F. H. M. MOMMAERTS, B. C. ABBOTT, AND W. J. WHALEN

I. Introduction . . . . .	517
II. Cardiac Automaticity and its Relation to Contraction . . . . .	519
III. Cardiac Contractility . . . . .	526
IV. Inotropic Effects . . . . .	532
V. The Efficiency of Myocardial Activity . . . . .	540
VI. Some Fundamental Aspects of Cardiac Contractility . . . . .	546
References . . . . .	552

AUTHOR INDEX . . . . .	557
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SUBJECT INDEX . . . . .	575
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## CHAPTER I

### Proteins of the Myofibril

ANDREW G. SZENT-GYÖRGYI

I. Introduction . . . . .	1
A. Proteins of Muscle . . . . .	1
B. Terminology and Reviews . . . . .	4
II. Characterization and Reactions of the Myofibrillar Proteins . . . . .	5
A. Myosin . . . . .	5
B. Actin . . . . .	24
C. Tropomyosin . . . . .	30
D. Paramyosin . . . . .	32
E. Other "Myofibrillar" Proteins . . . . .	33
III. Analysis of Fibrous Muscle Proteins . . . . .	34
A. Amino Acid Composition . . . . .	34
B. End Group and Sequence Studies . . . . .	40
IV. Polypeptide Chain Configuration of the Fibrous Muscle Proteins . . . . .	43
A. Wide-Angle X-Ray Studies . . . . .	43
B. Optical Rotation . . . . .	44
C. Small-Angle X-Ray and Electron Microscopic Studies . . . . .	47
References . . . . .	49

## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. PROTEINS OF MUSCLE

The proteins of muscle may be conveniently grouped into four major fractions. These fractions are: the sarcoplasmic proteins, the proteins of the granules, the proteins of the myofibril, and the stroma proteins. Such a grouping is convenient, since the members of the different fractions are localized in different entities of the muscle cell and contribute in a different fashion to its various activities. The differences in the extractability of these major fractions is one of the bases of such a classification.

#### 1. *The Sarcoplasmic Proteins*

The sarcoplasmic proteins are extracted with the greatest of ease and are frequently mentioned as the "soluble proteins" of muscle. These proteins occupy mostly the space between the myofibrils and can be brought into solution readily with water or with neutral salt solutions of low ionic strength ( $\Gamma/2 < 0.2$ ). The solution thus obtained has a low viscosity. The proteins extracted are myoglobin and enzymes, including

all the components of the glycolytic system and the various phosphokinases. The sarcoplasmic proteins do not contribute significantly to the filamentous organization of muscle, and after their removal, the characteristic morphological features of the different types of muscles remain apparently unaltered. In fact, these features can be best resolved in muscle preparations from which the soluble proteins have been previously extracted. The sarcoplasmic proteins do not seem to be directly involved in the structural reorganization which results in contraction. Their function is directed to other, mainly metabolic, activities of the cell. The contribution of sarcoplasmic proteins to the total proteins of muscle varies from species to species and depends on the embryonic development of the cell. The variation in the soluble proteins is considerably greater than the variation in fibrillar proteins. In adult rabbit or chick striated muscles, about 30% of the total protein is of sarcoplasmic origin (Hasselbach and Schneider, 1951; Robinson, 1952a, b). In the early stages of development (14 days), the sarcoplasmic proteins may comprise nearly 70% of the total proteins of embryonic chick muscle.

## 2. Granules

Most of the granules are removed from a well-homogenized muscle together with the sarcoplasmic proteins, by solvents of low ionic strength. Differential centrifugation is a convenient way to separate them from the soluble proteins. The important components of this fraction are the nuclei, the sarcosomes or mitochondria, and the microsomes. Several important activities are associated with these particles. The sarcosomes carry the enzyme systems of the oxidative cycle. The amount present in different muscles varies widely, and there is a good correlation between oxidative activity and sarcosomal content of various muscles (Paul and Sperling, 1952; Chappell and Perry, 1953). The important "relaxing factor" (Marsh, 1951) is closely associated with the microsomal particles (Kumagai *et al.*, 1955; Portzehl, 1957). The magnesium-activated ATPase of muscle which is not myosin appears to originate also from the microsomal fraction (Kielley and Meyerhof, 1950). The granules are localized between the myofibrils and in some instances appear to be localized in register with the Z membranes (Perry, 1956). Their presence is not a necessary requirement of contraction, although some of their components or products may significantly modify the behavior of the proteins participating in con-

traction, and may thus exert a controlling function. Elucidation of their role will certainly help to bridge the gap between the *in vitro* contraction of extracted fibers and that of the intact muscle fiber.

### 3. *Myofibrillar Proteins*

These are the proteins which are responsible for the filamentous organization of muscle and which directly participate in contraction. Their removal is accompanied by the disorganization and disappearance of the myofilaments (Hasselbach, 1953; Hanson and Huxley, 1953), and by a complete loss of birefringence. The myofibrillar proteins are frequently denoted as the "structure proteins" or "insoluble proteins" of muscle. For their extraction, neutral salt solutions of high ionic strength ( $\Gamma/2 > 0.5$ ) are required, even though, after extraction, some of them are soluble at lower ionic strength. The resistance to extraction is partly a result of the intimate associations and interactions between these proteins within the myofilaments. The high viscosity of the extract indicates the fibrous nature of the proteins brought into solution. From myofibrils of striated muscles and from most smooth muscles, three well identified components can be isolated: myosin, actin, and tropomyosin. In the "catch" muscles of Molluscs and Annelids, there is an additional major component—paramyosin. Actin, myosin, and tropomyosin comprise about 80% of the proteins of the myofibril of rabbit skeletal muscle (Perry, 1956). Since these structural proteins can be extracted under conditions which are sufficiently mild that they retain their biological activities, and since the solubilized proteins do not show obvious signs of denaturation, they are uniquely suited for study of some of the general properties of fibrous proteins, apart from the specific question of their participation in contraction.

### 4. *Stroma Proteins*

These are the proteins retained in the residue after prolonged extraction of a well-homogenized muscle with strong salt solutions. The residue contains some material of a collagenous nature contributing to the structure of the sarcolemma and possibly to the Z membrane. Because of their poor extractability, our knowledge of the components of stroma proteins is rather limited and their characterization has hardly begun.



## B. TERMINOLOGY AND REVIEWS

This chapter will describe some of the properties of the structure proteins of muscle. Since their role in contraction and their contribution to the structure of the muscle cell is discussed in other chapters, emphasis will be laid upon their isolation, characterization, and properties. Actin, myosin, tropomyosin, and paramyosin will be discussed in some detail. Apart from these, a number of other proteins, presumably of myofibrillar origin, have been reported. These are: delta protein (Amberson *et al.*, 1957), metamyosin (Raeber *et al.*, 1955), contractin or Y protein (Dubuisson, 1948; Schapira *et al.*, 1957), and X protein (A. G. Szent-Györgyi *et al.*, 1955). The identification and characterization of these proteins and their possible relationship to the major group of myofibrillar proteins is still in an initial stage, and they will be dealt with only cursorily.

The following nomenclature will be used:

*Myosin* denotes preparations free of actin or poor in actin. It includes the "crystalline" myosin of Szent-Györgyi (1943), the L-myosin of Weber (Schramm and Weber, 1942), and myosin A, a relatively actin poor preparation (Banga and Szent-Györgyi, 1941). The myosin  $\beta$  electrophoretic component of Dubuisson (1946a, b) corresponds to myosin.

*Actomyosin* denotes the myosin B of Szent-Györgyi (Banga and Szent-Györgyi, 1941) obtained by direct extraction from muscle, and the "artificial" or "synthetic" actomyosin prepared by mixing actin and myosin solutions. Those preparations described in the literature as "myosin" which contain considerable amounts of actomyosin, as deduced from the way of preparation, will be designated as actomyosin (e.g. the "myosin" of the era preceding the discovery of actin). The myosin  $\alpha$  electrophoretic component of Dubuisson (1946a, b) corresponds to actomyosin.

*Tropomyosin* denotes tropomyosin, the soluble tropomyosin of Bailey (1946, 1957), and the tropomyosin B of Kominz *et al.* (1957c).

*Paramyosin* denotes paramyosin (Hall *et al.*, 1945), the insoluble tropomyosin of Bailey (1957c), and the tropomyosin A of Kominz *et al.* (1957c).

Since 1950, a number of books (Mommaerts, 1950; Szent-Györgyi, 1951, 1953; Dubuisson, 1954) and reviews (Weber and Portzehl, 1952, 1954; Bailey, 1954; Mommaerts, 1954; Hamoir, 1955a; Hanson and