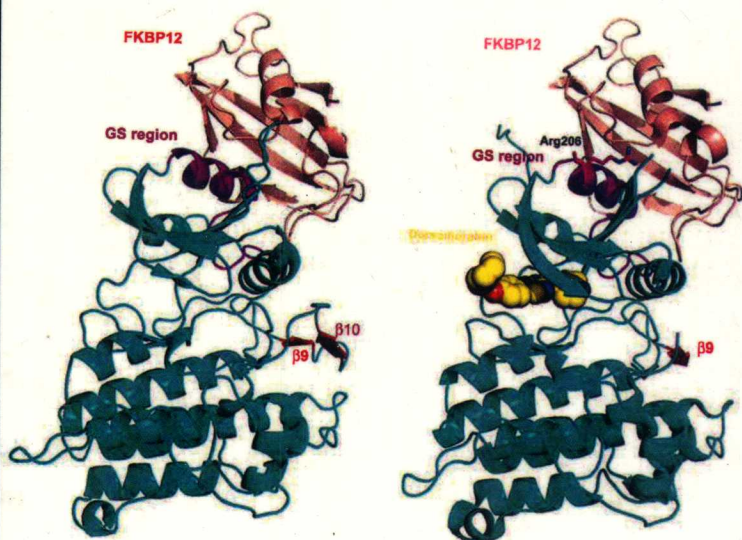


# ACTIVINS AND INHIBINS

EDITED BY  
GERALD LITWACK



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VOLUME EIGHTY-FIVE

# VITAMINS AND HORMONES

## Activins and Inhibins

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# VITAMINS AND HORMONES

## Activins and Inhibins

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## PREFACE

Activin and inhibin are dimeric proteins. There are three possible activins, based on the content of  $\beta_A$  and  $\beta_B$  subunits, and two inhibins, based on the content of  $\alpha$  and  $\beta_A$  or  $\beta_B$  subunits.  $\beta_A$  subunit is  $\sim 32$  kDa, and activin A ( $\beta_A$ - $\beta_A$ ) is about 100 kDa. Activin is synthesized in the gonads, pituitary, and placenta, and its action is to stimulate the synthesis and secretion of follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) from the anterior pituitary. Inhibin inhibits the synthesis of FSH as well as the secretion of gonadotropic-releasing hormone (GnRH) from the hypothalamus. GnRH acts on the gonadotropic cell of the anterior pituitary to cause the release of FSH. Besides its effect on FSH, activin has activities in cell proliferation, metabolism, differentiation, apoptosis, and others. Inhibin's effect on FSH is known, but less is known about its functions and the mechanism by which it can inhibit the actions of activin. In this volume, these features of the two hormones are reviewed and the latest information on their characteristics and activities is recorded.

Chapter 1, entitled "Activin receptor-like kinase and the insulin gene," is by R. Watanabe. Chapter 2, an important structural chapter, is entitled "Crystal structure of activin receptor type IIB kinase domain" and authored by S. Han. Chapter 3, entitled "Activin/Nodal signaling and pluripotency," is authored by Z. Chng, L. Vallier, and R. Pedersen. Chapter 4 is entitled "Intracrine signaling mechanisms of activin A and TGF- $\beta$ " and is by O. A. Gressner. Chapter 5, "Negative regulation of activin signal transduction," is offered by S.-C. Choi and J.-K. Han. This is followed by Chapter 6, "Antagonism of activin by activin chimeras," by U. Muenster, R. Korupolu, R. Rastogi, J. Read, and W. H. Fischer. Chapter 7, "Activins and cell migration," is authored by H.-Y. Kang and C.-R. Shyr. K. L. Walton, Y. Makanji, D. M. Robertson, and C. A. Harrison contributed Chapter 8, "The synthesis and secretion of inhibins." Regarding the central nervous system, H. Ageta and K. Tsuchida introduce "Multifunctional roles of activins in the brain." Following along with the biological functions of activin, C. Payne, J. King, and D. Hay report on "The role activin/nodal and Wnt signaling in endoderm formation." "Activin in glucose metabolism" is covered by O. Hashimoto and M. Funaba, and K. Ogawa and M. Funaba discuss "Activin in humoral immune responses." "The regulation and functions of activin and follistatin in inflammation and immunity" is a report by M. P. Hedger, W. R. Winnall, D. J. Phillips, and D. M. de Kretser. Y. Makanji, C. A. Harrison, and D. M. Robertson contribute "Feedback regulation by inhibins A and B of the pituitary secretion of

follicle-stimulating hormone.” Chapter 15 describes “Activin A in nonalcoholic fatty liver disease” by A. Yndestad, J. W. Haukeland, T. B. Dahl, B. Halvorsen, and P. Aukrust.

The figure on the book cover is Fig. 2.1. It shows the type I receptor kinase domain structures. (A) The structure of  $T\beta RI$  in complex with FKBP12. (B) ActRI kinase domain in complex with FKBP12 and dorsomorphin.

I appreciate the cooperation of Narmada Thangavelu, Lisa Tickner, and Delsy Retchagar, all of Elsevier, in aspects of the production of this volume.

*Gerald Litwack*  
October 13, 2010

# CONTENTS

*Contributors*

*xiii*

*Preface*

*xvii*

<b>1. Activin Receptor-Like Kinase and the Insulin Gene</b>	<b>1</b>
Rie Watanabe	
I. Introduction	2
II. TGF- $\beta$ Family Receptors: ALK	3
III. Activin Isoforms A, B, and AB	5
IV. Nodal	9
V. Insulin Gene Regulation	9
VI. Conclusion	15
Acknowledgments	16
References	16
<b>2. Crystal Structure of Activin Receptor Type IIB Kinase Domain</b>	<b>29</b>
Seungil Han	
I. Introduction	30
II. Type I Receptor Kinase Domain Structures	31
III. 3D Structure of ActRIIB	32
IV. Conclusion	36
References	36
<b>3. Activin/Nodal Signaling and Pluripotency</b>	<b>39</b>
Zhenzhi Chng, Ludovic Vallier, and Roger Pedersen	
I. Introduction	40
II. Conclusion	51
References	52
<b>4. Intracrine Signaling Mechanisms of Activin A and TGF-<math>\beta</math></b>	<b>59</b>
Olav A. Gressner	
I. Common TGF- $\beta$ and Activin A Signaling and Target Genes: Focusing on CTGF/CCN2	60

II. The Early Response to Cellular Stress: Intracellular Activation of TGF- $\beta$	61
III. Continuous Low-Level Activation of Activin A/TGF- $\beta$ Target Genes	63
IV. Intracrine Signaling: General Aspects	65
V. Intracrine Signaling of TGF- $\beta$ : The Stimulatory Pathway	66
VI. Intracrine Signaling of TGF- $\beta$ : The Inhibitory Pathway	70
VII. Intracrine Activin A Signaling	72
VIII. Conclusion	73
References	74
<b>5. Negative Regulation of Activin Signal Transduction</b>	<b>79</b>
Sun-Cheol Choi and Jin-Kwan Han	
I. Introduction	80
II. Extracellular Antagonists	82
III. Negative Regulation of Activin Receptor Function	85
IV. Inhibitory Smads	89
V. Interfering with Smad Function	90
VI. Negative Regulation of Gene Transcription	94
VII. Conclusions	97
Acknowledgments	98
References	98
<b>6. Antagonism of Activin by Activin Chimeras</b>	<b>105</b>
Uwe Muenster, Radhika Korupolu, Ratindra Rastogi, Jessica Read, and Wolfgang H. Fischer	
I. Introduction	106
II. The Activin/BMP Receptor System	107
III. Design of Chimeras	115
IV. Assessment of Binding and Biological Properties of Chimeras	116
V. Summary, Conclusions, and Future Directions	121
Acknowledgments	123
References	123
<b>7. Activins and Cell Migration</b>	<b>129</b>
Hong-Yo Kang and Chih-Rong Shyr	
I. Introduction	130
II. Molecular Mechanism of Activin Signaling Regulated Cell Migration	132
III. The Role of Activins in the Regulation of Tumor Cell Migration and Metastasis	134
IV. The Role of Activins in the Modulation of Immune Cell Migration	139
V. Conclusion and Future Prospective	142
Acknowledgments	143
References	144

<b>8. The Synthesis and Secretion of Inhibins</b>	<b>149</b>
Kelly L. Walton, Yogeshwar Mankanji, David M. Robertson, and Craig A. Harrison	
I. Introduction	150
II. Inhibin Expression and Regulation	151
III. Expression Profile of Inhibin in Human Tissues	155
IV. Inhibin Assembly	159
V. Circulating Inhibin Forms	164
VI. Concluding Remarks	170
References	171
<b>9. Multifunctional Roles of Activins in the Brain</b>	<b>185</b>
Hiroshi Ageta and Kunihiro Tsuchida	
I. Introduction	186
II. Expression Pattern of Activin and Activin Receptor in the Brain	187
III. Activin Receptor and its Regulatory Proteins	188
IV. Functions of Activins in the CNS	189
V. Conclusion and Perspectives	200
Acknowledgments	201
References	201
<b>10. The Role of Activin/Nodal and Wnt Signaling in Endoderm Formation</b>	<b>207</b>
Catherine Payne, Jason King, and David Hay	
I. Introduction	208
II. TGF $\beta$ Signaling	209
III. WNT/ $\beta$ -Catenin Signaling	210
IV. Applied Biology	212
V. Conclusions	214
Acknowledgments	214
References	214
<b>11. Activin in Glucose Metabolism</b>	<b>217</b>
Osamu Hashimoto and Masayuki Funaba	
I. Introduction	218
II. Activin Activity in Insulin-Producing and Insulin-Sensitive Tissues	219
III. Activin in Adipose Tissue Inflammation	225
IV. Conclusions and Future Directions	226
Acknowledgments	228
References	228

<b>12. Activin in Humoral Immune Responses</b>	<b>235</b>
Kenji Ogawa and Masayuki Funaba	
I. Introduction	236
II. Activin A in Th2 Cells	237
III. Activin A in B Cells	239
IV. Activin A in Macrophages	240
V. Activin A in Mast Cells	242
VI. Conclusions and Future Directions	246
References	248
<b>13. The Regulation and Functions of Activin and Follistatin in Inflammation and Immunity</b>	<b>255</b>
Mark P. Hedger, Wendy R. Winnall, David J. Phillips, and David M. de Kretser	
I. Introduction	256
II. Molecular Biology of Activin	258
III. Production and Regulation of Activin and Follistatin	264
IV. Activin Actions	270
V. Conclusions	280
References	281
<b>14. Feedback Regulation by Inhibins A and B of the Pituitary Secretion of Follicle-Stimulating Hormone</b>	<b>299</b>
Yogeshwar Mankanji, Craig A. Harrison, and David M. Robertson	
I. Introduction	300
II. Structure, Mechanism of Action, and Function of Inhibins and Activins	301
III. Inhibins A and B Mediated FSH Suppression in Males and Females	305
IV. Understanding the Increased Potency of Inhibin B <i>In Vivo</i> and <i>In Vitro</i>	312
Acknowledgments	317
References	317
<b>15. Activin A in Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease</b>	<b>323</b>
Arne Yndestad, John Willy Haukeland, Tuva B. Dahl, Bente Halvorsen, and Pål Aukrust	
I. Introduction	324
II. Nonalcoholic Fatty Liver Disease	325
III. Activin A in Liver Biology and Pathology	329

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IV. Activin A in NAFLD	331
V. Conclusion and Future Perspectives	337
References	338
<i>Index</i>	<i>343</i>

# ACTIVIN RECEPTOR-LIKE KINASE AND THE INSULIN GENE

Rie Watanabe<sup>1</sup>

## Contents

I. Introduction	2
II. TGF- $\beta$ Family Receptors: ALK	3
III. Activin Isoforms A, B, and AB	5
A. Activins and ALKs	5
B. Pancreatic endocrine cells	7
IV. Nodal	9
V. Insulin Gene Regulation	9
A. Transcription regulation: A element	10
B. Transcription regulation: GG element	11
C. Transcription regulation: cAMP response element (CRE)	12
D. Transcription regulation: C element	13
E. Transcription regulation: E element	13
F. Transcription regulation: Smad-binding element (SBE)	14
VI. Conclusion	15
Acknowledgments	16
References	16

## Abstract

The biological responses of the transforming growth factor- $\beta$  (TGF- $\beta$ ) superfamily, which includes Activins and Nodal, are induced by activation of a receptor complex and Smads. A type I receptor, which is a component of the complex, is known as an activin receptor-like kinase (ALK); currently seven ALKs (ALK<sub>1</sub>–ALK<sub>7</sub>) have been identified in humans. Activins signaling, which is mediated by ALK<sub>4</sub> and 7 together with ActRIIA and IIB, plays a critical role in glucose-stimulated insulin secretion, development/neogenesis, and glucose homeostatic control of pancreatic endocrine cells; the insulin gene is regulated by these signaling pathways via ALK<sub>7</sub>,

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which is a receptor for Activins AB and B and Nodal. This review discusses signal transduction of ALKs in pancreatic endocrine cells and the role of ALKs in insulin gene regulation. © 2011 Elsevier Inc.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The transforming growth factor- $\beta$  (TGF- $\beta$ ) superfamily, which includes TGF- $\beta$ s, Activins, Nodal, Inhibins, the bone morphogenetic proteins (BMPs), and growth and differentiation factors (GDFs), regulates a wide variety of cellular processes involving proliferation, differentiation, adhesion, apoptosis, and migration. All TGF- $\beta$  family members are synthesized as precursor proteins and form dimeric ligands, some of which remain inactive as latent forms by binding to their propeptides, for example, TGF- $\beta$ s and some GDFs, or as trapped forms by extracellular antagonists, for example, follistatin, which inhibits Activins and noggin and chordin which inhibit some BMPs (Moustakas and Heldin, 2009). On release from these inactive states, the dimeric ligands bind to pairs of membrane receptor serine/threonine kinases, type I (activin receptor-like kinases, ALKs) and type II receptors, promoting the formation of heterotetrameric receptor complexes (Fig. 1.1). Ligand binding induces a link between the constitutively active type II receptors and the dormant type I receptors; when the type II receptor phosphorylates a serine/threonine-rich region, called the GS region, in the cytoplasmic domain of the type I receptor, kinase activity of the type I receptor is stimulated, and ligand-dependent signal transduction then advances. Currently, five type II and seven type I receptors have been identified in mammals. In addition, the TGF- $\beta$  family ligands also interact with type III receptors: epidermal growth factor-Cripto-FRL1-Cryptic (EGF-CFC)/Cripto, endoglin, and the proteoglycan betaglycan, which are coreceptors and either facilitate or limit the signaling of the receptor kinase. In the absence of the ligand, the small proteins FKBP12 and FKBP12.6 bind to the GS region and maintain the inactive conformation of TGF- $\beta$  type I receptor by occluding the site of phosphorylation under the TGF- $\beta$  signaling.

The activated type I receptor phosphorylates receptor-regulated Smads (R-Smads) in the cytoplasm; phosphorylated R-Smads associate with common-mediator Smad (Co-Smad), Smad4, and the resulting Smad oligomer is then shuttled into the nucleus. In nucleus, the Smad complexes bind to target genes and regulate their expression together with other transcription factors (Fig. 1.1; Lönn *et al.*, 2009; Massague and Gomis, 2006, Massague *et al.*, 2005; Moustakas and Heldin, 2009; Schmierer and Hill, 2007; Zhang, 2009).