

# More, more and more on peptides

Piers Emson

**Regulatory Peptides.** Editors-in-chief S.R. Bloom and F.E. Bloom. 12/yr in 3 vols. (Elsevier Biomedical.) Dfl. 630. **Neuropeptides.** Editors M.J. Brownstein and J. Hughes. 6/yr in 2 vols. (Churchill Livingstone.) £44, \$93. **Peptides.** Chief editor A. Kastin. 6/yr. (Ankho International, Fayetteville, New York.) \$45 (personal); \$190 US, \$200 elsewhere (institutional).

SINCE the early 1970s, research into the physiology of the central and peripheral nervous system has been dramatically complicated by the discovery of neuronally-localized, biologically-active peptides. Some of these peptides were isolated in consequence of research into



hypothalamic releasing hormones or factors, notably by the groups of Guillemin at the Salk Institute and of Schally in New Orleans; others were initially discovered by Hughes and Kosterlitz at Aberdeen, as a result of the search for the endogenous ligand for the opiate receptor. Subsequently, other gut peptides, such as cholecystokinin and vasoactive intestinal polypeptide, have been found in the nervous system.

The physiological roles of these peptides are likely to be varied and they may act, for example, as conventional neurotransmitters as well as in the longer-term as hormones and trophic factors. It is the aim of the three new journals reviewed here to attract and publish original work on aspects of these burgeoning areas of research.

Of the three journals two, *Neuropeptides* and *Regulatory Peptides* (RP), are European, whilst the third, *Peptides*, is American. What is interesting about the origin of each of these publications is that they can, at least in part, be related to the three pioneering groups of the early 1970s. Thus, *Neuropeptides* is co-edited by John Hughes, and RP by Floyd Bloom at the Salk Institute, whilst Andrew Schally is on the editorial board of *Peptides*. This difference in provenance is also reflected in the initial volumes of each of the journals, as the editors have clearly sought articles from friends and colleagues.

RP is well produced and printed on a high-quality paper, which is well suited for reproduction of histochemical and anatomical figures. The editors hope to "emphasize the ability of peptides to control their targets according to some inferred rule", but it is as yet too soon to judge if they will succeed in this aim. The

articles in the first volumes cover a number of topics although a leaning towards the physiology of gut peptides is evident.

The scope of *Neuropeptides* is more restricted, the journal being concerned only with neuronal peptides. It is printed by photo off-set from the authors' text, resulting in an unattractive appearance and a lower quality, although adequate, reproduction of photomicrographs. Glancing through the early articles, *Neuropeptides* seems to have attracted more chemically-orientated papers with a bias towards chromatography and immunological characterization of neuropeptides.

Finally, *Peptides* has as its title implies a very broad brief covering any aspect of peptide research. It is well produced, and publishes high-quality photomicrographs including coloured plates. The initial articles cover a wide range of subjects but with emphasis on the behavioural effects of peptides.

Each of the journals has useful extra features and supplements; *Neuropeptides* publishes the University of Sheffield Peptide Bibliography, whilst RP and *Peptides* have included meeting supplements and abstracts. The scientific standard of articles in all three is patchy but reasonable.

I would congratulate all of the editors concerned on achieving a good standard through the difficult launch period of their respective publications. Although from the point of view of the consumer I would have preferred the appearance of just one, high-quality journal covering peptides, the rapid expansion of research in this area would seem to assure the future of all of these three newcomers. □

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## ...and tomorrow

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**Immunology Today.** Editor J.R. Inglis. 12/yr. (Elsevier Biomedical.) Dfl. 295 + compendium.

IN A field such as immunology which is saturated with journals, it is not an easy task to create a new publication which provides a unique contribution to the literature. *Immunology Today*, however, has been successful in doing just this. Journals of reasonable quality, dedicated primarily to the refereed publication of

individual research contributions, already serve both general immunology and several of its sub-specialities. In contrast, the editorial staff of *Immunology Today* have created an unconventional format which includes several novel features.

One regular component of the publication is its "News and Features" section which is dedicated to summaries of and comments upon the proceedings of selected international meetings. In par-



ticular, emphasis has been placed upon the rapid reporting of relatively specialized meetings which are attended by small numbers of participants but which have general interest and implications. This section has to date been very valuable, the writers being well-chosen authorities who have greatly extended the audience benefiting from several important meetings.

"Compass" is a second unique feature in which critical commentaries are solicited in response to recently published papers, thus providing an unusual opportunity for constructive public response to published work. Another section entitled "Rostrum" is a forum for hypothesis and speculation, and has generally offered stimulating contributions dealing with timely and controversial topics in immunology.

In addition, reviews are published which have provided a number of concise yet highly readable summaries of contemporary topics. The contributions differ from those of more conventional review publications in that they are comprehensible by readers with widely disparate areas of expertise and yet do not compromise scientific accuracy or sophistication.

*Immunology Today* is a very untraditional journal which in the two years of its existence has provided at a relatively low cost a readable source of information and opinion covering broad areas of immunology. It must be emphasized, however, that its format will be successful only so long as the individual contributions continue to be of high quality. If this standard is sustained, *Immunology Today* will become, or rather remain, an important adjunct to the conventional immunology literature. □

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