

**SENSORY NERVES AND
NEUROPEPTIDES IN
GASTROENTEROLOGY**

**From Basic Science to
Clinical Perspectives**

ADVANCES IN EXPERIMENTAL MEDICINE AND BIOLOGY

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From Basic Science to Clinical Perspectives

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SENSORY NERVES AND NEUROPEPTIDES IN GASTROENTEROLOGY

**From Basic Science to
Clinical Perspectives**

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PREFACE

In the past 15 years much evidence has accumulated which indicates the paramount importance of sensory nerves in regulating functions of the gastrointestinal tract. In parallel, the attention of researchers in this field has been increasingly attracted to the role played by neuropeptides in the normal and diseased gut. Basic research on the peculiar properties of capsaicin, the pungent ingredient from plants of the genus *Capsicum*, has allowed the gap between these two areas of research to be bridged. Since then, the study of gut afferents and neuropeptides has become more and more interconnected and recognized as a major avenue to understanding the pathophysiology of various human diseases. It is widely recognized that a certain subset of primary afferents synthesize, store and release neuropeptides (such as tachykinins and calcitonin gene-related peptide) from their central and peripheral endings, the latter being widely distributed in the alimentary canal and related organs (liver, pancreas).

The First International Meeting on Sensory Nerves and Neuropeptides in Gastroenterology, held in Florence from December 4-5, 1989, sponsored and organized by Fondazione Internazionale Menarini, aimed to focus the current status of research in this field. The contributions presented at the meeting and in this book delineate a suggestive scenario in which sensory nerves of the gut, and the multiple messages they carry through the release of neuropeptides, are to be considered as a major target for the development of new drugs potentially useful in a number of diseases of the gastrointestinal tract.

We are indebted to Donata Brugioni and Katherine Fay Loparco for the editorial assistance they provided. This volume could not have been published had we not had the cooperation of each of the contributors, for which we are sincerely thankful.

The Editors

C O N T E N T S

Capsaicin as a Tool for Studying Sensory
Neuron Functions..... 3
P. Holzer

Chemical Coding of Neurons in the Gastrointestinal
Tract..... 17
M. Costa, S. Brookes, P. Steele and J. Vickers

Occurrence and Distribution of Substance P- and CGRP-
Containing Nerve Fibers in Gastric Mucosa:
Species Differences..... 29
F. Sundler, E. Ekblad and R. Hakanson

Tachykinin and Calcitonin Gene-Related Peptide
Immunoreactivities and mRNAs in the
Mammalian Enteric Nervous System and
Sensory Ganglia..... 39
C. Sternini

Peptides and Their Receptors on Afferent Neurons
to the Upper Gastrointestinal Tract..... 53
G.J. Dockray, E.R. Forster and S.M. Louis

Activation of Sensory Nerves by Kinins: Pharmacologic
Tools for Studying Kinin Receptors 63
D. Regoli, N.E. Rhaleb, N. Rouissi, C. Tousignant,
D. Jukic and G. Drapeau

Evolutionary Aspects in the Peripheral Peptidergic
Signals: CRF-Like Peptides and Modulation
of G.I. Functions..... 75
G. Improta

Gastric and Jejunal Ultrastructure in Capsaicin-Treated
Rats with and without Experimental Ulcer..... 85
C.J. Pfeiffer and S. Evangelista

Afferent Nerve-Mediated Control of Gastric Mucosal
Blood Flow and Protection..... 97
P. Holzer

Vagal Afferent Innervation and Regulation of
Gastric Function.....109
H.E. Raybould, P. Holzer, G. Thieffn, H.H. Holzer,
M. Yoneda and Y.F. Tache

Decrease of Duodenal Calcitonin Gene-Related Peptide- and Substance P-Like Immunoreactivity in Rat Duodenal Ulcers.....	129
D. Renzi, S. Evangelista, P. Mantellini and C. Surrenti	
Opioid-Sensitive Peripheral Neuronal Activity in the Modulation of Gastric Mucosal Injury.....	137
J.V. Esplagues and B.J.R. Whittle	
Relationship between Sensory Neuropeptides and Other Vasoactive Mediators in Modulating Gastric Mucosal Integrity.....	147
B.J.R. Whittle	
Effect of Substance P and Related Neurokinins on Gastric Acid Secretion.....	157
G. Coruzzi, M. Adami and G. Bertaccini	
Effect of Calcitonin Gene-Related Peptide (CGRP) on Aspirin- and Ethanol-Induced Injury in the Rat Stomach.....	167
I. Th. Lippe	
Visceral Pain: Pathophysiology and Clinical Aspects.....	175
P. Procacci, M. Maresca and R.M. Cersosimo	
Central and Peripheral Actions of Calcitonin Gene- Related Peptide on Gastric Secretory and Motor Function.....	183
Y. Tache, H. Raybould and J. Yu Wei	
Sensory Nerves of the Intestines: Role in Control of Pyloric Region of Dogs.....	199
G. Tougas, H.-D. Allescher, J. Dent and E.E. Daniel	
Vasoactive Intestinal Polypeptide (VIP) and the Specific Motor Response to Capsaicin of the Human Isolated Ileum.....	213
C.A. Maggi, S. Giuliani, P. Santicioli, R. Patacchini, E. Theodorsson, D. Turini, G. Barbanti, A. Giachetti and A. Meli	
Studies on Secretomotor Effects of Galanin on Various "In Vivo" or "In Vitro" Preparation.....	219
G. Soldani, G. Belloli, P. Ormas, G. Coruzzi, D.R. Brown and C. Beretta	
Aspects on the Role of Tachykinins and Vasoactive Intestinal Polypeptide in Control of Secretion, Motility and Blood Flow in the Gut.....	233
E. Theodorsson, B. Smedfors, P. Hellström, O. Söder, A. Aly, A. Musat, A.B. Panja and C. Johansson	
Efferent Function of Capsaicin-Sensitive Nerves and Neurogenic Vasodilation in Rat Mesenteric Circulation.....	241
S. Manzini, M. Tramontana and F. Perretti	

Tachykinin Receptors in the Longitudinal and Circular Muscle of the Human Ileum.....	249
S. Giuliani, C.A. Maggi, R. Patacchini, P. Santicioli, D. Turini, G. Barbanti, P. Rovero, A. Giachetti and A. Meli	
Alterations in Receptors for Sensory Neuropeptides in Human Inflammatory Bowel Disease.....	253
P.W. Mantyh, M. Catton, J.E. Maggio and S.R. Vigna	
Sensory Denervation with Capsaicin Reduces the Liver Collagen Deposition Induced by Common Bile Duct Obstruction in Rats.....	285
A. Casini, I. Th. Lippe, S. Evangelista, P. Geppetti, P. Santicioli, C. Urso, C.A. Maggi and C. Surrenti	
Autonomic Neuropathy in Liver Cirrhosis: Prevalence and Association with Clinical and Laboratory Features.....	295
S. Giancane, M. Bernardi, F. Trevisani, P.E. D'Intino, M.R. Tamé, A. Gasbarrini, A. Rimondi and G. Gasbarrini	
2-Deoxy-D-Glucose (2-DG)-Induced Increase in Gastric Acid Secretion Is Impaired in Capsaicin-Pretreated Rats.....	301
S. Evangelista, P. Santicioli and C.A. Maggi	
INDEX.....	307

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