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Biophysical Chemistry 56 (1995) 1

Biophysical Chemistry

Preface

The papers in this Special Issue represent the larger part of the lectures presented at the Sixth International Congress on Retinal Proteins, held 20–24 June 1994 in Leiden, The Netherlands. This biannual meeting aims at the exchange of knowledge on the newest findings in the field of photoreception and signal or energy transduction by proteins using retinal as a chromophore, emphasizing analysis and interpretation of structure and mechanism at a molecular level.

This sixth meeting was organized by a local committee consisting of J. Lugtenburg (chairman), W.J. de Grip (programme supervisor), H.J.M. de Groot (treasurer), R.I.D. Cremer-Michels and K.J. Hellingwerf (secretariat) and A.P. Izerman (industrial contacts). The meeting presented novel findings from a variety of approaches: photochemical, biophysical, biochemical, molecular biological, physiological, highlighting new insights in structure and function of the established members of this family (the archaebacterial family of retinal proteins and the visual pigments) as well as the present status of just recently discovered members (circadian photopigments, retinochromes).

The retinal protein field is at the forefront of membrane protein research in general. A large body of the contemporary molecular information on membrane protein structure and dynamics stems from this field. The participants at this meeting again witnessed the recent progress being made by highly multidisciplinary approaches to give very detailed information about retinal proteins, through electron imaging and novel developments in biophysical (vibrational, NMR, ESR spectroscopy, kinetic analysis) and recombinant DNA (expression systems, site-specific labelling) techniques. Clearly a multidisciplinary approach is becoming an essential element of modern frontier research. Noteworthy also is the large proportion of papers resulting from international collaborations.

The local organizing committee wishes to thank all participants for their lively discussions and contributions and for making this such an outstanding and rewarding meeting, which has made a further contribution to the development of networks of retinal protein researchers.

Willem J. de Grip
Nijmegen, The Netherlands

A. Watts
Oxford, UK