
Preface

DOI: 10.1039/b710329h

Dr Geoffrey Young, as editor of the first volume in this series in 1968, commented that 'one could hardly ask for a more exciting time at which to review the field'. As a Chapter author, since those early days, I have seen the exciting times continue and the many volumes in this series have been party to great developments in the field. Solid phase synthesis, in its infancy in 1968, has revolutionised the making and manufacturing of peptides and no doubt the number and complexity of the peptides being made these days can only have been dreamt of 40 years ago. The availability of cloned proteins has made available molecular receptors, that now can routinely be used in molecular recognition studies, so that the development of efficient inhibitors has a much more rational basis. The principles of solid phase peptide synthesis have spawned not only a new approach to enhancing the pool of peptides available, but also the discipline of combinatorial chemistry. Numerous novel amino acids have been identified, and research in molecular recognition has increased the demand for novel non-proteinogenic amino acids. Thus developments in asymmetric synthesis have found excellent opportunities in the amino acid context, whose syntheses now depend less on the traditional resolution of synthesised racemates.

These Specialist Reports have co-existed with the establishment of major international peptide societies, the American, European and Japanese Peptide Societies, and their associated Journals. These have been instrumental in promoting the developments in amino acids, peptides and proteins across a very broad spectrum of activity that transcends the frontiers between chemistry and biology.

This vast expansion of the field has inevitably placed a great deal more pressure on the reporting authors. Yes, computational scanning of the literature has aided the harvesting of papers, but has done little to assist the important phase of placing in context the true significance of the developments in the field. This is a burden that has little recognition, so as I pass on the mantle of Senior Reporter to others, I empathise with and salute the hard work of colleagues who have given long hours of endeavour to produce chapters that are available for you to read within the covers of these SPRs.

This particular Volume has aimed to bring the review coverage up to the end of 2004, and therefore concentrates on the publications of 2003–4. This has brought more pressures of space on the authors, which has meant more selectivity in the selection of papers for review. The recent years have coincided with the ebbing of peptide research in the UK, with fewer research groups from which review authors could be drawn. This Volume has been made possible by the significant input of Hungarian colleagues, Botond Penke, Gábor Tóth Györgyi Váradi, Marta Zarandi, Etelka Farkas and Imre Sóvágó augmenting the continuing efforts of Donald Elmore and John Davies over many years. We all hope that this SPR offers a true reflection of the vast area of activity worldwide. We would have preferred a better time frame to publication, but critical delays have been brought about by pressure of work.

We have aimed to promote good standards of nomenclature, so we have been very grateful for Dr John Jones's unceasing effort to preserve standards and invite the best from others. We are grateful for his willingness to allow his contributions to be compiled within the many Volumes of this series. We also appreciate the assistance of RSC Publishing staff, and we can only hope that the series in its own way contributes to the exciting developments in this field, and prevented many a 'rediscovery of the wheel', which can happen, if the literature is not adequately and thoroughly surveyed.

John S. Davies
Swansea, 2007

