

BIOLOGICAL CHEMISTRY

*Founded in 1877 by Felix Hoppe-Seyler as
Zeitschrift für Physiologische Chemie*

Felix Hoppe-Seyler (1825–1895) was a pioneer of biochemistry, remembered not only for his discovery of hemoglobin and his contributions to the chemical characterization of many other biological compounds and processes but also for having been the mentor of Friedrich Miescher and Albrecht Kossel. In his preface to the first issue of *Zeitschrift für Physiologische Chemie*, Felix Hoppe-Seyler coined the term *Biochemistry* ('Biochemie') for the then newly emerging discipline.

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COVER ILLUSTRATION

The image on the front cover shows a planarian flatworm of the species *Schmidtea mediterranea*. Large numbers of pluripotent stem cells equip a multitude of planarian species - such as *S. mediterranea* - with fantastic regenerative abilities. As even tiny fragments of these animals regenerate into full worms over the course of about a week, planarians have become a model for regeneration research. Intriguingly, piRNAs, small non-coding RNAs dedicated to transposon control in germ cells of higher organisms, were also found to be essential for planarian regeneration. However, their molecular mode of action in planarians remained enigmatic. To address this shortcoming, Kim et al. characterize the planarian piRNA pathway in their review article on pp. 1123-1141 in this issue, motivated by recent progress that now enables the molecular study of piRNA function in planarians. Furthermore, the authors discuss that piRNAs exhibit crucial roles in mRNA surveillance in planarian stem cells, and describe somatic functions of piRNAs, *e.g.* in the planarian epidermis. Taken together, the recent advances reviewed by Kim et al. establish that piRNAs possess additional functions in planarians apart from transposon control. These additional functions are likely essential for regeneration and might aid our understanding of human stem-cell driven regeneration.

Photo courtesy of Dr. Elizabeth Duncan, University of Kentucky in Lexington, KY, USA.



Contents

Reviews

Shahin Alizadeh-Fanalou, Ali Nazarizadeh, Fatemeh Alian, Parisa Faraji, Bahareh Sorori and Mohsen Khosravi
Small dense low-density lipoprotein-lowering agents — 1101

Iana V. Kim, Sebastian Riedelbauch and Claus-D. Kuhn
The piRNA pathway in planarian flatworms: new model, new insights — 1123

Research Articles

Narges Marvastizadeh, Bahareh Dabirmanesh, Reza H. Sajedi and Khosro Khajeh
Anti-amyloidogenic effect of artemin on α -synuclein — 1143

Antônio F. da Silva Filho, Lucas B. Tavares, Maira G. R. Pitta, Eduardo I. C. Beltrão and Moacyr J. B. M. Rêgo
Galectin-3 is modulated in pancreatic cancer cells under hypoxia and nutrient deprivation — 1153

María Eugenia Chamorro, Romina Maltaneri, Agustina Schiappacasse, Alcira Nesse and Daniela Vittori

Role of protein tyrosine phosphatase 1B (PTP1B) in the increased sensitivity of endothelial cells to a promigratory effect of erythropoietin in an inflammatory environment — 1167

Andrea Hulina-Tomašković, Anita Somborac-Baćura, Marija Grdić Rajković, Iva Hlapčić, Martina Bosnar and Lada Rumora

Effects of extracellular Hsp70, lipopolysaccharide and lipoteichoic acid on human monocyte-derived macrophages and differentiated THP-1 cells — 1181

Yunjing Li, Yongfu Ma, Tong Zhang, Changjiang Feng and Yang Liu

High-mobility group box 3 (HMGB3) silencing inhibits non-small cell lung cancer development through regulating Wnt/ β -catenin pathway — 1191