

We are IntechOpen, the world's leading publisher of Open Access books Built by scientists, for scientists

6,900

Open access books available

185,000

International authors and editors

200M

Downloads

Our authors are among the

154

Countries delivered to

TOP 1%

most cited scientists

12.2%

Contributors from top 500 universities



WEB OF SCIENCE™

Selection of our books indexed in the Book Citation Index
in Web of Science™ Core Collection (BKCI)

Interested in publishing with us?
Contact book.department@intechopen.com

Numbers displayed above are based on latest data collected.
For more information visit www.intechopen.com



Attenuin: What It Is, How It Works and What It Does

Ana Gordon, José C. Garrido-Gracia, Rafaela Aguilar, Carmina Bellido,
Juana Martín de las Mulas and José E. Sánchez-Criado
*University of Córdoba
Spain*

1. Introduction

The reproductive function in female mammals, unlike that of males, is cyclical in nature. Whilst testosterone exerts a wholly negative control, regulation of the ovarian cycle is effected through a complex series of positive and negative feedback mechanisms involving the ovary, the pituitary and the hypothalamus. Although the role of these feedback mechanisms has been known for many years, our knowledge of the detailed workings involved continues to expand. Reproductive-axis hormones have proved to be similar in all the mammalian species studied to date. The female cycle can generally be divided into the follicular, periovulatory (preovulatory and ovulatory) and luteal phases. The pituitary hormones – the gonadotropins luteinizing hormone (LH) and follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) – remain at basal levels throughout most of the reproductive cycle, due to negative regulation by ovarian hormones (mainly estradiol and progesterone; see fig. 1 for additional details). The physiological capacity of steroids to control gonadotropin secretion is evident in a marked increase in plasma LH and FSH levels after the menopause or following ovariectomy. During the preovulatory phase, the estradiol negative feedback switches to positive. Major positive actions by estrogens include: a 20- to 50-fold increase in pituitary sensitivity to gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) (Speight et al., 1981); an increase in pituitary GnRH receptors, in concert with GnRH (Clayton et al., 1980); an increase in progesterone receptors (PR) in both pituitary and hypothalamus (Conneely et al., 1989); stimulation of GnRH synthesis and release, resulting in preovulatory GnRH secretion (Sarkar et al., 1976); and a drop in GnRH metabolism by pituitary cells (Danforth et al., 1990). These positive actions of estradiol lead to the appearance of GnRH self-priming. GnRH self-priming is an event with a twofold effect: it prompts an exponential increase in pituitary responsiveness to GnRH, and it coordinates increased responsiveness with enhanced GnRH release, ensuring that both occur at the same time and thus guaranteeing preovulatory LH secretion (Fink, 1995). In rats, this self-priming effect has been found to be more effective when GnRH pulses occur at hourly intervals (Fink, 1995), a frequency also reported to be optimal in monkeys with hypothalamic lesions (Knobil, 1980) and in women with idiopathic hypogonadotropic hypogonadism (Crowley et al., 1985). How does GnRH come to possess this unique property? Probably because the preovulatory LH surge is indispensable for species reproduction, and the fact that a very small amount of GnRH induces a disproportionate release of LH makes the process both economic and efficient

(Fink, 1995). In conclusion, although the cyclical nature of reproduction has been recognized in both humans and animals for centuries, the sequence of events involved has only recently become clear, and a number of questions remain unanswered (Schwartz, 2000).

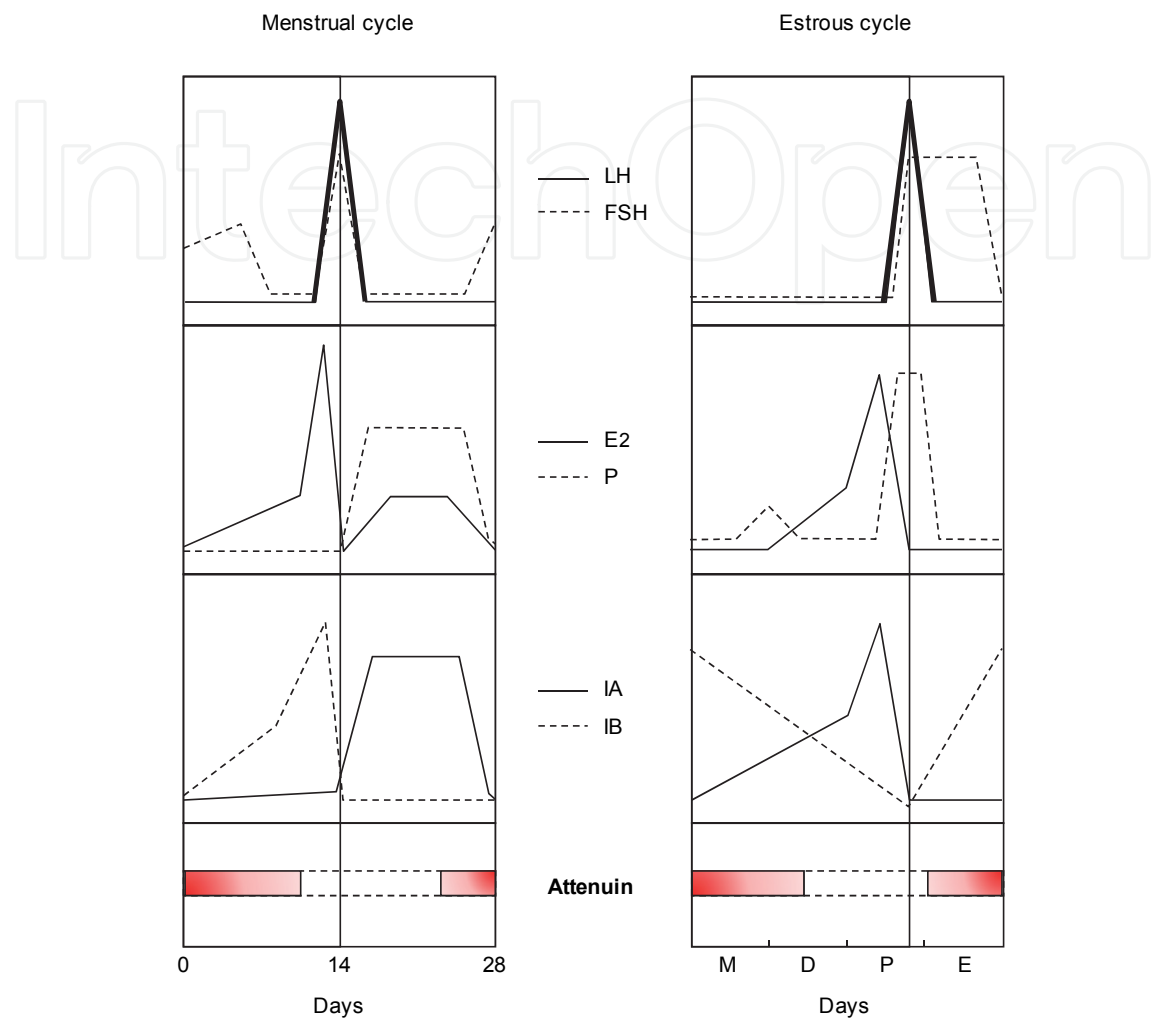


Fig. 1. Diagram showing pituitary and ovarian hormone fluctuation during menstrual (woman) and estrous (rat) cycles. LH: luteinizing hormone; FSH: follicle-stimulating hormone; E2: estradiol; P: progesterone; IA: inhibin A; IB: inhibin B; M: metestrus; D: diestrus; P: proestrus; E: estrus. Days of cycle are synchronized with the LH surge (day 14 in women and proestrous afternoon in rats). During the menstrual cycle, and shortly after functional luteolysis (drop in E2, P and IA) the secretion of FSH increased, stimulating the ovaries and inducing follicular recruitment. In the rat, secondary FSH secretion during early estrus stimulated the ovaries, similarly inducing follicular recruitment. In both cases, increased FSH secretion augmented attenuin bioactivity by stimulating the ovaries (lower panels). Attenuin bioactivity prevented premature occurrence of the LH surge (see text for additional details).

One crucial and still-unresolved question is how the negative feedback exerted by estradiol suddenly switches to positive, resulting in the preovulatory LH surge. Though this issue has been argued back and forth, no agreement has yet been reached. The positive effects of estradiol do not all occur at the same time, nor are they present only during preovulatory

secretion. For example, the increased steroid-induced pituitary response to GnRH is directly linked to steroid levels during the follicular phase (Yen et al., 1972). Moreover, GnRH self-priming can be observed experimentally long before the LH surge is due (Waring & Turgeon, 1980). All this would suggest that steroids have to reach a critical threshold before generating any LH surge (de Koning, 1995), or alternatively that some factor is exerting a “braking” effect on the estradiol positive feedback (Whitehead, 1990). Studies of *in vitro* fertilization (IVF) methods argue against the idea of a critical level of estradiol (200 pg/ml during 36–48 h): reports indicate that in FSH-treated women with multiple follicles able to produce supraphysiological levels of estradiol from the beginning of the follicular phase, preovulatory LH secretion does not occur prematurely, and when it does appear it is diminished (Ferraretti et al., 1983; Glasier et al., 1988; Messinis et al., 1986). High levels of steroids are unlikely to inhibit the preovulatory LH surge, and high exogenous doses of estradiol are unable to suppress LH secretion in normal menstrual cycles (Messinis & Templeton, 1987). There is thus no evidence to support the hypothesis that abnormal estradiol levels inhibit preovulatory LH secretion in stimulated cycles; indeed, the evidence so far points to the existence of some non-steroidal factor, produced by stimulated ovaries and able to suppress steroidal positive feedback. Over recent decades, the search for putative new substances secreted by the ovaries has provided new insights into the role of the ovaries in gonadotropin secretion. This chapter focuses on the factor known as attenuin (Messinis & Templeton, 1989; Sopelak & Hodgen, 1984).

1.1 Evidence for the existence of attenuin

The development of IVF methods for addressing infertility in the 1970s and 1980s also shed new light on the role of FSH. In addition to its classic functions (stimulation of aromatase activity and estradiol secretion in granulosa cells, and participation in follicular selection mechanisms), FSH was found to stimulate the production of an ovarian factor with a special ability to reduce preovulatory LH secretion in women. The first evidence for an ovarian factor that attenuated GnRH-induced LH secretion appeared in the late 70s, when de Jong et al. (1979), using bovine follicular fluid (bFF), observed a drop in the responsiveness of rat pituitary cells to GnRH. Over the following decade, a number of studies pointed to the existence of a non-steroidal ovarian factor that reduced preovulatory LH release when FSH was administered during the follicular phase in women (Ferraretti et al., 1983; Messinis & Templeton, 1986), monkeys (Littman & Hodgen, 1984; Schenken et al., 1984) and rats (Busbridge et al., 1988; Geiger et al., 1980). This factor was called gonadotropin surge-attenuating factor (GnSAF), gonadotropin surge-inhibiting factor (GnSIF) or simply attenuin. In 1984, Schenken et al. demonstrated for the first time a direct effect of FSH on gonadotropin secretion, involving one or more ovarian factor(s). Ovarian venous serum (OVS) was collected from FSH-treated monkeys before and after aspiration of the right ovarian follicle; the left ovarian follicle remained intact. Serum from right ovaries before aspirated and from intact left ovaries inhibited GnRH responsiveness in rat pituitary cultures, suggesting that exogenous FSH increased OVS concentrations of a non-steroidal ovarian factor with gonadotropin-inhibiting activity. The ovarian origin of attenuin was confirmed when Fowler et al. (2002), culturing theca, stroma and granulosa cells from cyclic women, showed that attenuin bioactivity was present only in granulosa-cell-conditioned medium. Use of a superovulated protocol as a model for increased attenuin bioactivity posed a number of problems, including elevated peripheral estradiol and inhibin levels during gonadotropin administration (de Jong, 1988; Messinis & Templeton, 1988;

Muttukrishna et al., 1994), which raised doubts as to the origin of this bioactivity. With regard to estradiol, studies carried out in women have proved that effects on LH secretion are not due to negative feedback: Messinis et al. (1991, 1993) demonstrated that a single FSH injection had dose-dependent suppressive effects on pituitary responsiveness to exogenous GnRH pulses. This effect was seen as early as 8 h after FSH administration, although circulating estradiol did not increase significantly until at least 24 h after gonadotropin administration. Subsequently, this group also concluded that attenuin bioactivity in FSH-treated women could not be due to an increase in circulating total α -inhibin (Messinis et al., 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996).

Attenuin bioactivity has so far been found in serum, FF and ovarian extracts from superovulated (Fowler et al., 1994a) and cyclic women (Fowler et al., 1995a), in bFF (Van Dieten et al., 1999), in porcine FF (pFF; Danforth et al., 1987; Kita et al., 1994), in rat ovarian extracts (de Koning et al., 1989) and in rat testicular extracts (Tio et al., 1994). It should be stressed that attenuin bioactivity has been observed in human FF (hFF) from women during an untreated spontaneous cycle, suggesting that it plays a physiological role as a central regulator (Busbridge et al., 1990; Byrne et al., 1993).

1.2 Current status of attenuin characterization

In 1987 Danforth et al., using pFF, showed that attenuin bioactivity displayed certain characteristics: it was resistant to moderate heating (60 °C for 60 min), fully recoverable from an acetone precipitation, and not bound by a heparin/sepharose affinity matrix of the sort widely used to isolate inhibin. To date, attempts to characterize attenuin have proved relatively unsuccessful. Purification strategies have obtained very small amounts of bioactive material and an abundance of different proteins. The fact that the protein is present at very low concentrations makes it difficult to use Edman sequencing, leading to a whole range of different results. Tio et al. (1994) isolated inhibin and attenuin by high performance liquid chromatography from 32 liters of rat Sertoli cell-conditioned medium. Both peptides were separated on polyacrylamide gel; however the partial N-terminal sequence of the 37 kDa protein with attenuin bioactivity did not match gene and protein databases (Genbank and PIR). Subsequently, employing an elegant sequential series of purification techniques, Danforth & Cheng (1995) found a 69 kDa monomeric polypeptide in pFF that inhibited GnRH-stimulated LH secretion, but partial N-terminal analysis showed no homology with other reproductive hormones. Mroueh et al. (1996) also found a protein with attenuin bioactivity in hFF, similar to that reported in pFF (63 kDa). However, Pappa et al. (1999), starting from the same source (hFF) treated with multiple and complex purification techniques, described a protein with a molecular mass of 12.5 kDa. This protein was identified by mass spectrometry as a truncated part of the C-terminus of human serum albumin (HSA). The next published purification procedure side-stepped serum albumin contamination problems by using a serum- and BSA-free granulosa-luteal cell culture system (Fowler et al., 2002). The isolated attenuin-bioactivity protein had a molecular weight of 60-70 kDa and an isoelectric point (pI) of 5.7-5.8 pH. The internal and N-terminal amino acid sequences did not display significant homology with other accessions in the protein-sequence database. Attenuin is therefore thought to be a peptide, different from inhibin, with a postulated molecular weight which varies from less than 37 kDa (Tio et al., 1994) to 64-69 kDa (Danforth & Cheng, 1995; Fowler et al., 2002). These differences may reflect the presence either of small active subunits or of larger aggregates with or without carrier proteins, and may also reflect species differences. Ingeniously, using the expression-

secretion system of a yeast (*Pichia Pastoris* GS115), it has proved feasible to produce recombinant polypeptides of HSA. Various polypeptides thus obtained were added to rat pituitary cultures and only those corresponding to subdomain IIIB (specifically residues 490-585) presented attenuin bioactivity, while the whole molecule and even the whole subdomain IIIB were inactive (Tavoulari et al., 2004). More recently, Karligiotou et al. (2006) used the retrotranscriptase-polymerase chain reaction (RT-PCR) technique and appropriate primers to amplify different transcripts from HSA gene in granulosa cells. Results showed that while all HSA fragments were expressed in the nucleus, only two fragments (the promoter and a C-terminal fragment) were expressed in granulosa cell cytoplasm, indicating a differential expression of the HSA gene, probably leading to attenuin synthesis. Finally, the current attenuin purification strategy involves the use of phage display techniques to produce antibodies against partially-purified human-granulosa-luteal cell-conditioned medium. Three of these antibodies were found to block human attenuin bioactivity on GnRH-induced LH secretion from rat pituitary cell cultures. Subsequently, these antibodies were used to immunopurify attenuin; the antigen-antibody complexes obtained were separated by electrophoresis. Candidate attenuin spots (around 66 kDa and pI 5.5-6.0) were excised for peptide mass mapping. The main molecules identified were HSA precursor and variants. All these data suggest that attenuin may be a post-translationally modified form of serum albumin, or else may be very tightly bound to, and transported by, serum albumin (Sorsa-Leslie et al., 2005).

1.3 Synthesis and secretion pattern of attenuin

In women, the production of attenuin in the ovarian follicle is clearly related to follicular size in both spontaneous and stimulated cycles. FF from follicles smaller than 11 mm (stimulated cycles, Fowler et al., 1994b) or 6-8 mm (spontaneous cycles, Fowler et al., 2001) has been found to contain the greatest amount of attenuin. In women receiving fertility treatment, there is an increase both in the number of follicles and in serum attenuin bioactivity with respect to spontaneous cycles (Byrne et al., 1993). Similarly, small follicles in pig ovaries contain the highest attenuin concentrations, while bioactivity falls sharply in preovulatory follicles (Kita et al., 1994). Thus, medium from granulosa cell cultures showed more attenuin bioactivity when these cells were obtained from aspiration of small follicles (Seo & Danforth, 1994). All these findings suggest that small and growing follicles are the major producers of attenuin. In summary, attenuin levels are highest during the early part of the menstrual cycle (days 1 to 8), falling thereafter as follicular size increases, and disappearing at the appropriate preovulatory time (Fowler et al., 2003). The corpus luteum does not appear to produce attenuin in women, but small developing follicles may produce attenuin during the luteal phase (Messinis et al., 1996; fig. 1 lower panel).

2. Methods of study

2.1 In vivo

In the absence of purified bioactive molecule, for the reasons indicated above, the effect of attenuin on the LH surge in rats is currently studied using both *in vivo* and *in vitro* procedures. The *in vivo* approach consists in administration of exogenous FSH during the diestrous phase in cycling rats as a tool to increase the biological activity of endogenous attenuin (Geiger et al., 1980; Gordon et al., 2008). In addition to attenuin, FSH also stimulates the synthesis and secretion by granulosa cells of a number of steroidal and non-steroidal

factors (mainly estradiol and inhibin) that affect pituitary gonadotropin secretion (Arai et al., 1996; Watanabe et al., 1990). However, this treatment attenuates the magnitude of the proestrous afternoon LH surge despite the presence of high circulating levels of estradiol (Geiger et al., 1980; Gordon et al., 2008, de Koning et al., 1987; see fig. 2A for additional details).

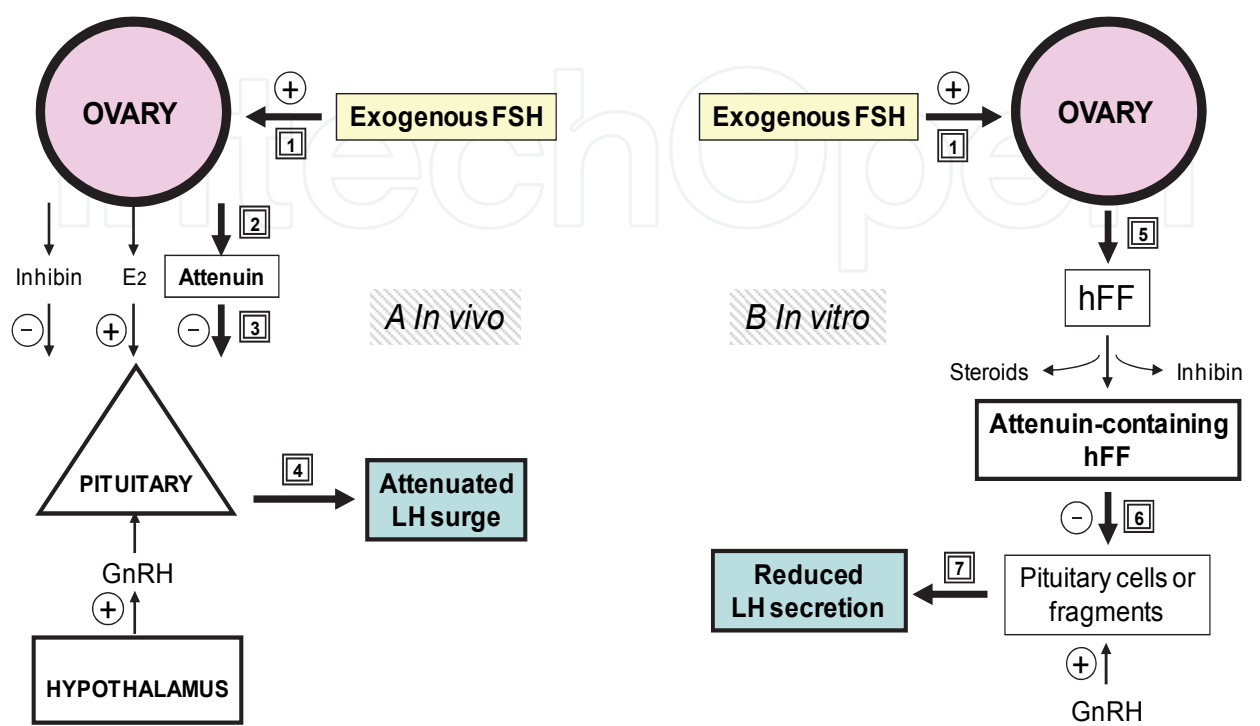


Fig. 2. Schematic representation of current approaches to the study of attenuin effects on luteinizing hormone (LH) secretion. GnRH: gonadotropin releasing hormone; E2: 17 β -estradiol; FSH: follicle-stimulating hormone; hFF: human follicular fluid. A: *in vivo*. [1] Administration of FSH stimulates the synthesis/secretion of ovarian hormones (E2, inhibin and attenuin) [2]. Whereas in proestrus inhibin suppresses FSH secretion (Gordon et al., 2010a, 2010c) and E2 acts on LH secretion in its positive feedback mode [2], attenuin acting on gonadotrope membrane receptor [3] results in a reduction of the magnitude of the LH surge [4]. B: *in vitro*. Administration of FSH stimulates follicular growth and recruitment [1]. Pooled hFF from women undergoing IVF treatments [5] is submitted to steroid charcoal-extraction and inhibin immunoprecipitation (Gordon et al., 2010c). Attenuin-containing hFF is then added to cultured pituitary cells or fragments [6]. This results in a reduction of GnRH-stimulated LH secretion [7].

At the same time, the bioactivity of attenuin can be promoted and/or prolonged by removing endogenous inhibin and consequently increasing endogenous FSH. One option is the neutralization of inhibin's biological activity by injection of an anti-inhibin serum on metestrus that increases FSH serum levels during diestrus and proestrus, induces superovulation and again reduces the magnitude of the proestrous afternoon LH surge (Ishigame et al., 2004).

2.2 In vitro

However, it is difficult to delineate, *in vivo*, the precise bioactivity of attenuin in the rat pituitary using exogenous FSH. Alternatively, attenuin bioactivity can be studied by *in vitro*

procedures, using cultured anterior pituitary cells or pituitary fragments treated with murine FF (Busbridge et al., 1990; Fowler & Spears, 2004), pFF (Danforth & Cheng, 1995) or hFF from women undergoing IVF treatments (Byrne et al., 1995a, 1996; Fowler & Templeton 1996) as a source of exogenous attenuin, following steroid and inhibin depletion (see fig. 2B for additional details).

3. Mechanism of attenuin action

3.1 Background

Despite considerable research and the availability of improved molecular techniques, little is known about how attenuin acts. This section outlines the key findings reported to date. *In vitro* experiments have highlighted the potentiating effects of increased intracellular calcium, stimulation of both intracellular GnRH signalling pathways (calcium- and cAMP-dependent protein kinases, PKC and PKA respectively), as well as progesterone treatment on GnRH-induced LH secretion (Kile & Nett, 1994; Sánchez-Criado et al., 2006). A further clue regarding the mechanism by which attenuin acts was discovered when, in rat pituitary monolayers, GnRH was co-incubated with either estradiol, progesterone, PMA (phorbol 12-myristate 13-acetate, a stimulator of PKC) or calcium ionophore. All treatments potentiated the effects of GnRH on LH synthesis and release, but administration of hFF counteracted the enhancing effects of all these compounds, with one exception: the augmentative effect of progesterone on GnRH-induced LH synthesis (Cowking et al., 1995). Shortly afterwards, the authors found that while progesterone augmented GnRH self-priming in rat pituitary monolayers, this secretion was blocked when hFF and the antiprogestagen RU486 were added to the medium (Byrne et al., 1995b). All these findings suggest that the mechanism of action of attenuin on preovulatory LH secretion might involve the pituitary PR. There is considerable evidence, both *in vivo* and *in vitro*, to suggest that attenuin has a suppressant effect on GnRH self-priming (Byrne et al., 1996; Koppelaar et al., 1992, 1993). This action has been shown to be linked to a blockade of GnRH second messenger pathways rather than to competition between attenuin and GnRH for GnRH receptors (Fowler et al., 1994c; Tijssen et al., 1997). A study by Helder et al. (1997) reported that the unknown attenuin receptor located in the gonadotrope membrane might act through the cAMP pathway. It might thus be hypothesized that the inhibiting effect of attenuin on LH secretion is exerted through this GnRH second pathway. Both hypotheses, i.e. attenuin acting through a GnRH second pathway or through the PR, are feasible, since it has been shown that GnRH can activate the PR in a ligand-independent manner through the PKA and/or PKC pathways (Garrido-Gracia et al., 2006; Turgeon & Waring, 1994).

3.2 The relationship between attenuin and LH release

A number of published studies report a reduction of the preovulatory LH surge *in vivo* in rats treated with FSH during metestrus and diestrus (Culler, 1992; Geiger et al., 1980; Gordon et al., 2008; de Koning et al., 1987; Shuiling et al., 1999). Additionally, this FSH treatment *in vivo* causes an *in vitro* suppression of GnRH-stimulated LH secretion, GnRH self-priming and progesterone-potentiating effect on GnRH-stimulated LH secretion, without affecting basal LH levels (Byrne et al., 1996; Gordon et al., 2008; Koppelaar et al., 1992, 1993). *Pace* Geiger et al. (1980), the possibility that these effects are produced by an increase in estradiol levels can be ruled out, since animals treated with estradiol benzoate display greater LH secretion both *in vivo* and *in vitro*; more important, FSH plus estradiol-

injected ovariectomized rats do not display any suppressant effect on LH secretion (Gordon et al., 2008). All this proves conclusively that FSH treatment stimulates the production of some ovarian factor(s) other than estradiol, that reduces the preovulatory LH surge but not basal LH secretion. Subsequent *in vitro* research has shown that attenuin produces this inhibiting effect on pituitary sensitivity to GnRH in a dose-dependent manner: administration of different doses of FSH (0.1, 1 and 10 I.U.) caused variable inhibition of LH secretion, partially reversed by simultaneous administration of estradiol (Gordon et al., 2009a). Attenuin would thus appear to bind to its gonadotrope membrane receptor and activate a secondary pathway in order to inhibit preovulatory LH secretion (Fowler & Templeton, 1996). The potentiating effects of progesterone, 8-bromo cAMP and PMA on GnRH-stimulated LH secretion are antagonized in rat hemipituitaries incubated with steroid-free bFF (bFF) or with FF from women undergoing a superovulation protocol (Cowking et al., 1995; Tijssen et al., 1997). All this suggests that attenuin may exert a suppressant effect on the GnRH secondary pathway. Subsequent research has shown that neither progesterone, nor GnRH, nor activation of PKA and PKC has any effect on GnRH-stimulated LH secretion in FSH-treated cyclic rats (Gordon et al., 2008; 2009b), indicating that this effect is probably produced downstream of PKA, PKC and progesterone. Given these findings, and the fact that attenuin decreases all PR-dependent parameters of LH secretion, it may be postulated that this action is exerted through a modification of PR expression and/or action (Garrido-Gracia et al., 2007).

3.3 The relationship between attenuin, PR and LH release

With regard to the effect of FSH-treatment on PR gene expression in rats, RT-PCR analysis has revealed a partial decrease in PR mRNA (Gordon et al., 2008). Nevertheless, immunohistochemical examination revealed no difference in the number of PR-positive pituitary cells in FSH injected rats (Gordon et al., 2008, 2009b) or rats in which inhibin was immunoneutralized; the latter group, however, did not display a similar partial decrease in PR mRNA (Gordon et al., 2010a). These differences may be due to different FSH and/or attenuin levels between experimental groups. In most species and tissues, PR is expressed by a single gene but transcribed into separate mRNAs as two distinct molecular forms, PR-A and PR-B. The B (stimulatory) form contains an additional N-terminal sequence and is the main transcription factor, while the A form is modulatory of B in nature (Vegeto et al., 1993; Wen et al., 1994). For this reason, the present authors decided to analyze two inhibiting possibilities: an increase in PR-A and a decrease in PR-B protein levels. While passive immunization against inhibin with an anti-inhibin serum attenuated preovulatory LH secretion in cyclic rats, pituitary protein levels of both PR isoforms were unaffected by the absence of inhibin. This was the first time the two PR isoform protein levels had been demonstrated using the western blot technique in rat pituitaries (Gordon et al., 2010a). Although attenuin could exert its negative action on LH secretion by several mechanisms, the results pointed to a possible involvement of attenuin in post-translational modifications of PR, leading to its inactivation. Phosphorylation at serine residues is the most frequent post-translational processing event in PR modification (Beck et al., 1992; Takimoto & Horwitz, 1993) and is involved in PR-regulated gene transcription (Denner et al., 1990; Faus & Haendler, 2006). To explore this question, two studies were carried out: the first sought to measure PR phosphorylation levels, while the second aimed to determine the effect of phosphatases on pituitary sensitivity to GnRH.

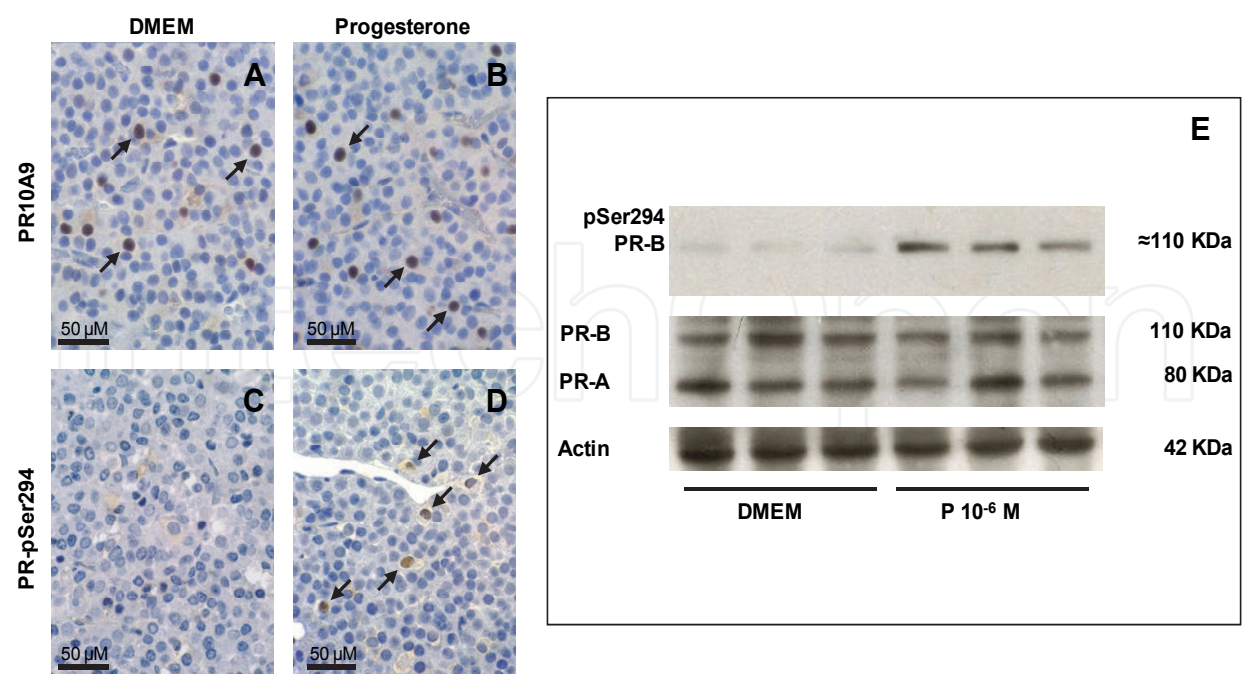


Fig. 3. Methods of studying progesterone receptor (PR) phosphorylation in rat gonadotropes. Left panel: Immunoreactive products to PR10A9 antibody in the nuclei of gonadotropes, the only rat pituitary cell expressing PR (Garrido-Gracia et al., 2008). Pituitaries were incubated with medium alone (A, DMEM) or progesterone (B). No differences were found between the number of PR positive gonadotropes. Immunohistochemical expression of phosphorylated PR gonadotropes (C, D) in anterior pituitaries from proestrous rats (Gordon et al., 2009b). Immunoreactive products to pSer294 antibody are observed only in gonadotropes of pituitaries incubated with progesterone (D). The relative expression of pSer294-positive gonadotropes and PR10A9-positive gonadotropes provides an approximation of the PR phosphorylation rate. Right panel: PR A and B isoforms and phosphorylated PR-B content in pituitaries from proestrous rats incubated either with medium alone (DMEM) or with progesterone ($P\ 10^{-6}\ M$). Only PR-B phosphorylated product is seen in pituitaries incubated with progesterone (Gordon et al., 2011).

In the first study, the PR phosphorylation protocol in pituitaries was optimized by adding progesterone to the incubation medium. Subsequently, pituitaries from rats treated with FSH or with anti-inhibin serum were immunostained with an antibody that recognizes the immunogen corresponding to amino acid residues 288–300 from human PR-B, Ser294 being phosphorylated (Clemm et al. 2000). All the experimental groups in which attenuin was increased and preovulatory secretion diminished showed a significant drop in the number of cells expressing pSer294 (Gordon et al., 2009b, 2010a; fig. 3, left panel). The following study analyzed the *in vitro* effect of calyculin, a potent inhibitor of intracellular phosphatases (Condrescu et al. 1999), on GnRH-stimulated LH secretion and GnRH self-priming in FSH-treated rats. The results showed that this drug was able, albeit partially, to reverse GnRH-stimulated LH secretion in a dose-dependent manner (Gordon et al., 2009b). Altogether, these results suggest that the ovarian-dependent inhibitory effect of FSH injection on the preovulatory LH secretion in the rat may involve an imbalance between the activities of protein kinases and phosphatases, resulting in a dephosphorylation of pituitary PR (see fig. 4 for additional details). In the light of previous

immunohistochemical data (Gordon et al., 2009b, 2010a; fig. 3, left panel), the preliminary results obtained using the western blot technique (Gordon et al., 2011; fig. 3 right panel) supported the hypothesis that attenuin produces an inhibiting effect on LH secretion by dephosphorylation of pituitary PR.

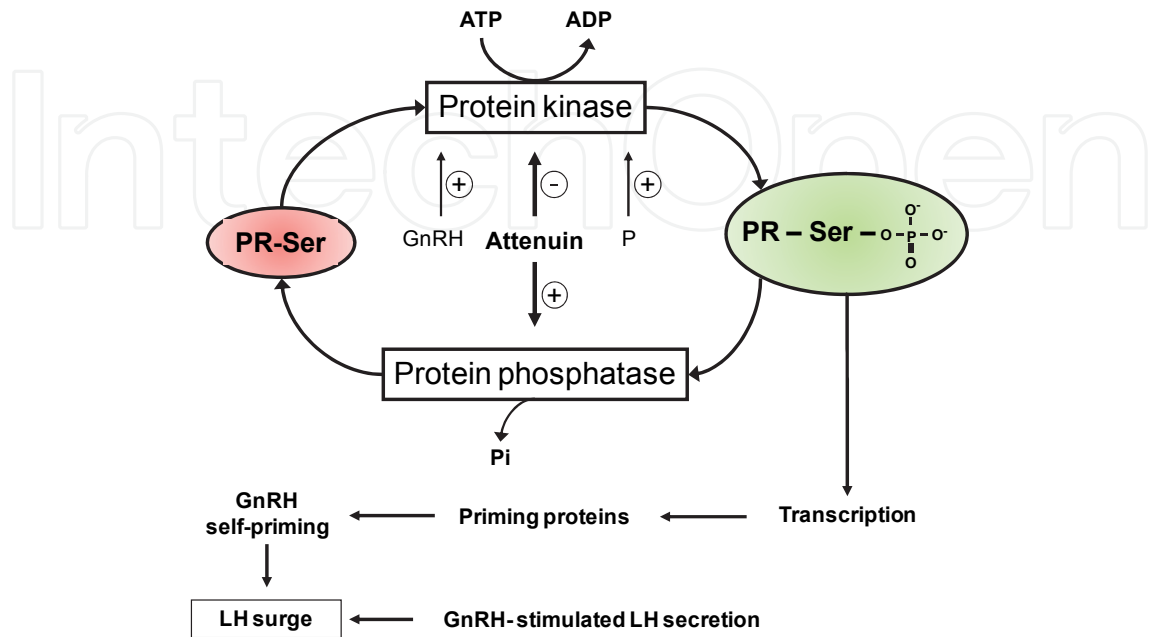


Fig. 4. **Proposed effects of attenuin on the LH surge.** GnRH: gonadotropin releasing hormone; PR-Ser: gonadotrope unphosphorylated progesterone receptor (PR); PR-Ser-PO₄²⁻: gonadotrope phosphorylated PR. PR can be activated/phosphorylated in a ligand-dependent (progesterone) or independent (GnRH second pathways) manner. Attenuin reduces phosphorylation of Ser (serine) of the immunogen MAPGRS(p)PLATTV located in the N-terminal domain of PR-B. Activated PR-B transcribes “priming proteins” resulting in GnRH self-priming. This unique property of gonadotropes, together with estradiol sensitization of gonadotropes to GnRH, results first in GnRH-stimulated LH secretion and finally in the LH surge.

3.4 The relationship between attenuin and LH synthesis

The preovulatory secretion of LH is the result not only of increased LH synthesis (Tse et al., 1993) but also of increased LH secretion by gonadotropes (Ramey et al., 1987). While the effects of attenuin on LH secretion have been exhaustively studied, it is not known whether attenuin has any effect on LH synthesis. Fowler et al. (1995b), using rat pituitary cultures, studied the effects of steroid-free and inhibin-depleted hFF on GnRH- augmented LH synthesis and secretion in rat pituitary cultures. Results showed a decrease in both parameters, suggesting that this factor reduces pituitary responsiveness to GnRH by suppressing both the *de novo* synthesis and the acute and long term release of LH. However, there is no evidence to show how attenuin might effect this suppression. The present authors found that the addition of ionomycin (a calcium ionophore) to the incubation medium did not result, as expected, in a massive release of LH in pituitaries from FSH-treated rats. Moreover, no differences were found in LH secretion between calyculin plus GnRH and ionomycin, indicating a possible failure in LH synthesis (Gordon et al., 2009b). LH pituitary content and LHβ mRNA expression were therefore evaluated; results showed

that FSH treatment decreased pituitary LH content in intact, but not in ovariectomized, rats injected with estradiol benzoate, without affecting LH β mRNA levels. Altogether, these results suggest lower LH synthesis caused by attenuin, potentiating its inhibiting effects on LH secretion (Gordon et al., 2009a).

3.5 The relationship between attenuin, PR and LH synthesis

To determine whether pituitary PR was involved in LH synthesis inhibition by attenuin, cyclic rats were injected with different doses of FSH and progesterone. Results showed that while progesterone by itself had no effect (control groups), saturation of PR with the cognate ligand reversed the inhibitory effect of attenuin on LH protein levels, although not on LH secretion (Gordon et al., 2010b). Apart from these results showing that attenuin probably inhibits LH synthesis at post-transcriptional level, little is known about the mechanism involved in that inhibition – probably by increasing LH degradation (Kitahara et al., 1990) and/or decreasing GnRH-induced LH polypeptide glycosylation (Ramey et al., 1987) – except that, as indicated earlier, the inhibitory pathway in LH synthesis involves the gonadotrope PR. However, the detailed mechanism underlying the PR-mediated attenuin-induced inhibition of LH protein levels requires further detailed investigation. Even so, the available evidence supports the view of PR as a keystone in the neuroendocrine integrator at both hypothalamic and pituitary levels (Levine et al., 2001). In conclusion, it is postulated that, just as inhibin controls FSH synthesis and release (Attardi et al., 1991; Scott & Burger 1981), attenuin reduces proestrous GnRH-dependent LH secretion through a dual mechanism of action: inhibition of both LH synthesis and LH release.

4. The possible physiological role of attenuin

4.1 Humans

Menstrual cyclicity in women is highly dependent on positive and negative ovarian feedback mechanisms. During the follicular phase of the cycle, estradiol plays a key role in the control of both gonadotropins. Together with this steroid, low concentrations of circulating progesterone and inhibin B also contribute to the control of LH and FSH secretion, respectively. During the luteal phase, both estradiol and progesterone regulate secretion of the two gonadotropins, while inhibin A plays a role in FSH secretion. The transition from follicular to luteal phase involves a preovulatory secretion of both LH and FSH, helped by the estradiol positive mode (fig. 1, left panel). However, the change from negative to positive estradiol feedback at some threshold cannot entirely account for the change from pituitary insensitivity to the maelstrom of events leading to the LH surge. Although the question remains unresolved, there is evidence that estradiol and attenuin interact on the pituitary in the context of the positive feedback mechanism. It may be assumed that estradiol sensitizes the pituitary to GnRH, while attenuin antagonizes that sensitizing effect. Based on existing knowledge regarding attenuin action and its secretion pattern, it has been suggested that attenuin activity is greater during the early and midfollicular phases and lower both in the late follicular phase and at midcycle. Therefore, the pituitary LH response to GnRH is low during the early and midfollicular phase and is markedly enhanced during the late follicular phase, triggering the full expression of the preovulatory LH surge. According to this hypothesis, the role of attenuin in humans is to control the amplitude and not the onset of the LH surge (Messinis et al., 2006). It should be highlighted the possible role of attenuin in the polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). In PCOS,

the mechanism responsible for abnormal gonadotropin secretion (elevated serum LH) has not been completely elucidated. One possible etiopathology mechanism is an increased of pituitary responsiveness to GnRH, caused by a decreased in attenuin production (Ruiz et al., 1996). This would offer an explanation for the most common endocrine disease that affects ovulation and fertility. At the same time, and once attenuin had been isolated, this peptide could be used as a GnRH antagonist and as a physiological contraceptive agent.

4.2 Rats

Administration of FSH during the diestrous phase prompts a reduction in proestrous LH secretion in the rat. It is worth noting that the effects of attenuin on proestrus can only be observed with this treatment (Culler, 1992; Geiger et al., 1980; Koppenaal et al., 1991). However, it is difficult to determine with any precision the role of attenuin in physiological conditions using this experimental model. Previous findings by the present authors (Gordon et al., 2010c) give grounds for speculation regarding the possible physiological role of attenuin. The incubation protocol for pituitary glands from intact cycling rats on each of the 4 days of the estrous cycle demonstrated the existence of GnRH self-priming in diestrous and proestrous phases. Subsequently, steroid-free inhibin-depleted hFF was added to the medium. Results reported by Fowler et al. (Fowler et al., 1994b, 2001, 2003) suggest a reduction in attenuin synthesis and/or secretion when the ovarian follicle is close to preovulatory size. For this reason, we used hFF from follicles of two sizes: small (<15 mm in diameter) and large (>15 mm in diameter). Surprisingly, results in terms of secretion levels showed that only diestrous GnRH self-priming, but not proestrous self-priming as expected from the effects of injected FSH, was susceptible to the inhibiting action of attenuin contained in hFF. It should be noted that hFF from both large and small follicles had the same effects on all the LH and FSH secretion parameters so far studied. Nevertheless, the possibility that a different inhibitory bioactivity of hFF may be found using hFF from smaller follicles cannot be ruled out (Fowler et al., 2003; Fowler & Spears, 2004). Overall, these facts were interpreted as signifying that, during the normal estrous cycle, ovarian attenuin inhibited pituitary PR-dependent GnRH self-priming in diestrus only. Later on, in proestrus, pituitaries become either desensitized to the inhibitory bioactivity of attenuin and/or sensitized to the stimulatory activity of GnRH (fig. 1, right panel). By contrast, Tijssen et al. (1997) showed that attenuin was able to suppress both diestrous and proestrous GnRH self-priming. These discrepancies may be due to the different origins of FF (human vs. bovine), to the experimental model used (static vs. dynamic incubation) and to the absence or presence of inhibin. Previous results published by this research group (Tébar et al., 1996, 1998) support the hypothesis that the pituitary loses sensitivity to attenuin when follicles reach the preovulatory size, which would account for estradiol suddenly exerting a positive feedback. This intriguing mechanism, by which pituitaries become insensitive to attenuin and/or sensitive to the stimulatory action of GnRH, may provide an extra clue for understanding estrous cycle length regulation. This factor would limit the physiological timing (proestrous afternoon) as well as the magnitude (preovulatory secretion) of pituitary responsiveness to GnRH. This research thus shows how a decrease in endogenous FSH levels during diestrus, with a consequent reduction in attenuin production but no significant effect on estradiol levels, gives rise to a 1- or 2-day advancement of blunted preovulatory LH surges in 4- (Tébar et al., 1996, 1998) and 5-day (Sánchez-Criado et al., 1996) cyclic rats, respectively. This suggests that, in physiological circumstances, submaximal FSH-dependent ovarian attenuin bioactivity prevents the premature LH surge in diestrus by

antagonizing the secretory effect of GnRH (Koppelaar et al., 1991; Tébar et al., 1998) and/or the sensitizing effect of estradiol on the pituitary (Schuiling et al., 1999). On the whole, all these findings, together with the existence of pituitary PR on diestrus, would suggest that PR-dependent GnRH self-priming in the diestrous phase in the 4-day cyclic rat is blocked by attenuin bioactivity.

5. Conclusions

Our work over the last few years suggests that attenuin is a FSH-dependent ovarian factor different from inhibin, which decreases preovulatory LH secretion in rats by activating gonadotrope membrane receptors, resulting in PR dephosphorylation. The reduction in PR activity is associated with a decrease in both LH secretion and LH synthesis.

The bioactivity of attenuin appears to play a major role in synchronizing physiological pituitary and ovarian events, so that preovulatory LH secretion is limited to proestrus, when the ovarian follicle and the oocyte are in optimal conditions to respond to the LH surge and to be fertilized, respectively.

However, all these findings must be viewed as speculative until experiments can be repeated using purified attenuin.

6. Acknowledgments

This review has been subsidized by grants BFU2008-00480 from DGICYT and P07-CVI2559 from CICE-Junta de Andalucía (Spain).

7. References

- Arai K, Watanabe C, Taya K & Sasamoto S 1996 Roles of inhibin and estradiol in the regulation of follicle-stimulating hormone and luteinizing hormone secretion during the estrous cycle of the rat. *Biology of Reproduction* 55: 127-133.
- Attardi B, Keeping HS, Winters SJ, Kotsuji F & Troen P 1991 Comparison of the effects of cycloheximide and inhibin on the gonadotropin subunit messenger ribonucleic acids. *Endocrinology* 128: 119-125.
- Beck CA, Weigel NL & Edwards DP 1992 Effects of hormone and cellular modulators of protein phosphorylation on transcriptional activity, DNA binding, and phosphorylation of human progesterone receptor. *Molecular Endocrinology* 6: 607-620.
- Busbridge NJ, Buckley DM, Cornish M & Whitehead SA 1988 Effects of ovarian hyperstimulation and isolated preovulatory follicles on LH responses to GnRH in rats. *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility* 82: 329-336.
- Busbridge NJ, Chamberlain GV, Griffiths A & Whitehead SA 1990 Non-steroidal follicular factors attenuate the self-priming action of gonadotropin-releasing hormone on the pituitary gonadotroph. *Neuroendocrinology* 51: 493-499.
- Byrne B, Fowler PA, Messinis IE & Templeton A 1993 Gonadotrophin surge-attenuating factor secretion varies during the follicular phase of the menstrual cycle of spontaneously cycling women. *Journal of Endocrinology* 139 (Suppl. p53).

- Byrne B, Fowler PA, Fraser M, Culler MD & Templeton A 1995a Gonadotropin surge-attenuating factor bioactivity in serum from superovulated women is not blocked by inhibin antibody. *Biology of Reproduction* 52: 88-95.
- Byrne B, Fowler PA & Templeton A 1995b GnSAF suppresses progesterone augmented GnRH self-priming. *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility; Abstract Series* 16: 3.
- Byrne B, Fowler PA & Templeton A 1996 Role of progesterone and nonsteroidal ovarian factors in regulating gonadotropin-releasing hormone self-priming in vitro. *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* 81: 1454-1459
- Clayton RN, Solano AR, Garcia-Vela A, Dufau ML & Catt KJ 1980 Regulation of pituitary receptors for GnRH during the rat estrous cycle. *Endocrinology* 107: 699-706.
- Clemm DL, Sherman L, Boonyaratankornkit V, Schrader WT, Weigel NL & Edwards DP 2000 Differential hormone-dependent phosphorylation of progesterone receptor A and B forms revealed by a phosphoserine site-specific monoclonal antibody. *Molecular Endocrinology* 14: 52-65.
- Condrescu M, Hantash BM, Fang Y & Reeves JP 1999 Mode-specific inhibition of sodium-calcium exchange during protein phosphatase blockade. *Journal of Biological Chemistry*. 274: 33279-33286.
- Conneely OM, Kettelberger DM, Tsai MJ, Schrader WT & O'Malley BW 1989 The chicken progesterone receptor A and B isoforms are products of an alternate translation initiation event. *Biological Chemistry* 264: 14062-14064.
- Cowking L, Fowler PA & Templeton A 1995 Acute exposure to ovarian steroids and a PKC activator do not overcome GnSAF bioactivity in vitro. *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility; Abstract Series* 15: 56-50.
- Crowley WF Jr, Filicori M, Spratt DI & Santoro NF 1985 The physiology of gonadotropin-releasing hormone (GnRH) secretion in men and women. *Recent Progress in Hormone Research* 41: 473-531.
- Culler MD 1992 In vivo evidence that inhibin is a gonadotropin surge-inhibiting/attenuating factor. *Endocrinology* 131: 1556-1558.
- Danforth DR, Sinosich MJ, Anderson TL, Cheng CY, Bardin CW & Hodgen GD 1987 Identification of gonadotropin surge-inhibiting factor (GnSIF) in follicular fluid and its differentiation from inhibin. *Biology of Reproduction* 5: 1075-1082.
- Danforth DR, Elkind-Hirsch K & Hodgen GD 1990 In vivo and in vitro modulation of gonadotropin-releasing hormone metabolism by estradiol and progesterone. *Endocrinology* 127: 319-324.
- Danforth DR & Cheng CY 1995 Purification of a candidate gonadotropin surge inhibiting factor from porcine follicular fluid. *Endocrinology* 136: 1658-1665.
- Denner LA, Weigel NL, Maxwell BL, Schrader WT & O'Malley BW 1990 Regulation of progesterone receptor-mediated transcription by phosphorylation. *Science* 250: 1740-1743.
- van Dieten JA, Helder MN, van den Oever C & de Koning J 1999 Non-steroidal factors in bovine follicular fluid inhibit or facilitate the action of pulsatile administration of GnRH on LH release in the female rat. *Journal of Endocrinology* 161: 237-243.
- Faus H & Haendler B 2006 Post-translational modifications of steroid receptors. *Biomedicine and Pharmacotherapy* 60: 520-528.

- Ferraretti AP, Garcia JE, Acosta AA & Jones GS 1983 Serum luteinizing hormone during ovulation induction with human menopausal gonadotropin for in vitro fertilization in normally menstruating women. *Fertility and Sterility* 40: 742-747.
- Fink G 1995 The self-priming effect of LHRH: a unique servomechanism and possible cellular model for memory. *Frontiers in Neuroendocrinology* 16: 183-190.
- Fowler PA, Cunningham P, Fraser M, McGregor F, Byrne B, Pappa A, Messinis IE & Templeton A 1994a Circulating gonadotrophin surge-attenuating factor from superovulated women suppresses in vitro gonadotrophin releasing-hormone self-priming. *Journal of Endocrinology* 143: 45-54.
- Fowler PA, Fraser M, Cunningham P, Knight PG, Byrne B, McLaughlin E, Wardle PG, Hull MGR & Templeton A 1994b Higher gonadotrophin surge-attenuating factor (GnSAF) bioactivity is found in small follicles from superovulated women. *Journal of Endocrinology* 143: 33-44.
- Fowler PA, Bramley TA, MacGregor F & Templeton A 1994c Does GnSAF act through the pituitary protein kinase C pathway? *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility; Abstract Series* 13: 40.
- Fowler PA, Fahy U, Culler MD, Knight PG, Wardle PG, McLaughlin EA, Cunningham P, Fraser M, Hull MG, Templeton A 1995a Gonadotrophin surge-attenuating factor bioactivity is present in follicular fluid from naturally cycling women. *Human Reproduction* 10: 68-74.
- Fowler PA, Fraser M, Cunningham P & Templeton A 1995b GnSAF suppresses both the synthesis and release of LH induced by GnRH. *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility; Abstract Series* 15: 55-50.
- Fowler PA & Templeton A 1996 The nature and function of putative gonadotrophin surge-attenuating/inhibiting factor (GnSAF/IF). *Endocrine Reviews* 17: 103-120.
- Fowler PA, Sorsa T, Harris WJ, Knight PG & Mason HD 2001 Relationship between follicle size and gonadotrophin surge attenuating factor (GnSAF) bioactivity during spontaneous cycles in women. *Human Reproduction* 16: 1353-1358.
- Fowler PA, Sorsa-Leslie T, Cash P, Dunbar B, Melvin W, Wilson Y, Mason HD & Harris W 2002 A 60-66 kDa protein with gonadotrophin surge attenuating factor bioactivity is produced by human ovarian granulosa cells. *Molecular Human Reproduction* 8: 823-832.
- Fowler PA, Sorsa-Leslie T, Harris W & Mason HD 2003 Ovarian gonadotrophin surge-attenuating factor (GnSAF): where are we after 20 years of research? *Reproduction* 126: 689-699.
- Fowler PA & Spears N 2004 The cultured rodent follicle as a model for investigations of gonadotrophin surge-attenuating factor GnSAF production. *Reproduction* 127: 679-688.
- Garrido-Gracia JC, Bellido C, Aguilar R & Sánchez-Criado JE 2006 Protein kinase C cross-talk with gonadotrope progesterone receptor is involved in GnRH-induced LH secretion. *Journal of Physiology and Biochemistry* 62: 35-42.
- Garrido-Gracia JC, Gordon A, Bellido C, Aguilar R, Barranco I, Millán Y, Martín de las Mulas J & Sánchez-Criado JE 2007 The integrated action of oestrogen receptor isoforms and sites with progesterone receptor in the gonadotrope modulate LH secretion: evidence from tamoxifen-treated ovariectomized rats. *Journal of Endocrinology* 193: 107-119.

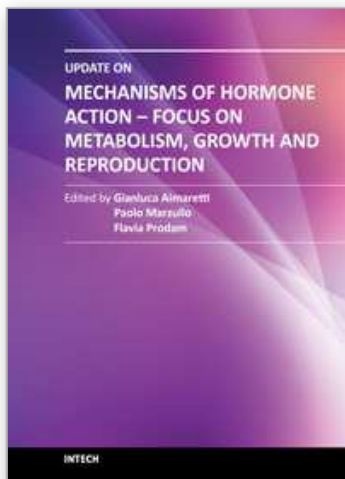
- Garrido-Gracia JC, Gordon A, Aguilar R, Monterde JG, Blanco A, Martín de Las Mulas J & Sánchez-Criado JE 2008 Morphological effects of oestradiol-17beta, and selective oestrogen receptor alpha and beta agonists on luteinising hormone-secreting cells in tamoxifen-treated ovariectomised rats. *Histology and Histopathology* 23: 1453-1463.
- Geiger JM, Plas-Roser S & Aron CI 1980 Mechanisms of ovulation in female rats treated with FSH at the beginning of the estrous cycle: changes in pituitary responsiveness to luteinizing hormone releasing hormone (LHRH). *Biology of Reproduction* 22: 837-845.
- Glasier A, Thatcher SS, Wickings EJ, Hillier SG & Baird DT 1988 Superovulation with exogenous gonadotropins does not inhibit the luteinizing hormone surge. *Fertility and Sterility* 49: 81-85.
- Gordon A, Garrido-Gracia JC, Aguilar R, Bellido C, Velasco JA, Millan Y, Tena-Sempere M, Martín de Las Mulas J & Sánchez-Criado JE 2008 The ovary-mediated FSH attenuation of the LH surge in the rat involves a decreased gonadotroph progesterone receptor (PR) action but not PR expression. *Journal of Endocrinology* 196: 583-592.
- Gordon A, Garrido-Gracia JC, Aguilar R & Sánchez-Criado JE 2009a Ovarian stimulation with FSH in the rat reduces proestrous GnRH-dependent LH secretion through a dual mechanism: inhibition of LH synthesis and release. *Neuroscience Letters* 460: 219-222.
- Gordon A, Garrido-Gracia JC, Aguilar R, Guil-Luna S, Millán Y, de Las Mulas JM & Sánchez-Criado JE 2009b Ovarian stimulation with FSH reduces phosphorylation of gonadotrope progesterone receptor and LH secretion in the rat. *Reproduction* 137: 151-159.
- Gordon A, Aguilar R, Garrido-Gracia JC, Guil-Luna S, Sánchez Cespedes R, Millán Y, Watanabe G, Taya K, Martín de Las Mulas J & Sánchez-Criado JE 2010a Immunoneutralization of Inhibin in Cycling Rats Increases Follicle-Stimulating Hormone Secretion, Stimulates the Ovary and Attenuates Progesterone Receptor-Dependent Preovulatory Luteinizing Hormone Secretion. *Neuroendocrinology* 91: 291-301.
- Gordon A, Garrido-Gracia JC, Sánchez-Criado JE & Aguilar R 2010b Involvement of rat gonadotrope progesterone receptor in the ovary-mediated inhibitory action of FSH on LH synthesis. *Journal of Physiology and Biochemistry* In press.
- Gordon A, Aguilar R, Garrido-Gracia JC, Bellido C, Millán Y, Guil-Luna S, García-Velasco JA, Bellido-Muñoz E, Martín de Las Mulas J & Sánchez-Criado JE 2010c Human follicular fluid (hFF) from superovulated women inhibits progesterone receptor (PR)-dependent GnRH selfpriming in an estrous cycle-dependent manner in the rat. *Journal of Endocrinological Investigation* 33: 564-570.
- Gordon A, Garrido-Gracia JC, Aguilar R & Sánchez-Criado JE 2011 La atenuina (GnSI/AF) ovárica reduce la secreción preovulatoria de LH en la rata por desfosforilación de la isoforma B del receptor de progesterona. 53º Congress of Spanish Society of Endocrinology and Nutrition, Santiago de Compostela, Spain.
- Helder MN, van Eersel SE, van Heurn JW & de Koning J 1997 Gonadotrophin surge-inhibiting factor inhibits GnRH-stimulated mitogen-activated protein kinase activation. *Human Reproduction* 1: 67-68.

- Ishigame H, Medan MS, Watanabe G, Shi Z, Kishi H, Aray KY & Taya K 2004 A new alternative method for superovulation using passive immunization against inhibin in adult rats. *Biology of Reproduction* 71: 236-243.
- de Jong FH, Welschen R, Hermans WP, Smith SD & van der Molen HJ 1979 Effects of factors from ovarian follicular fluid and Sertoli cell culture medium on in-vivo and in-vitro release of pituitary gonadotrophins in the rat: an evaluation of systems for the assay of inhibin. *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility (Suppl.)* 26: 47-59.
- de Jong FH 1988 Inhibin. *Physiological Reviews* 68: 555-607.
- Karligiotou E, Kollia P, Kallitsaris A & Messinis IE 2006 Expression of human serum albumin (HSA) mRNA in human granulosa cells: potential correlation of the 95 amino acid long carboxyl terminal of HSA to gonadotrophin surge-attenuating factor. *Human Reproduction* 21: 645-650.
- Kile JP & Nett TM 1994 Differential secretion of follicle-stimulating hormone and luteinizing hormone from ovine pituitary cells following activation of protein kinase A, protein kinase C, or increased intracellular calcium. *Biology of Reproduction* 50: 49-54.
- Kita M, Taii S, Kataoka N, Shimatsu A, Nakao K & Mori T 1994 Changes of gonadotrophin surge inhibiting/attenuating factor activity in pig follicular fluid in relation to follicle size. *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility* 101: 59-66.
- Kitahara S, Winters SJ, Attardi B, Oshima H & Troen P 1990 Effects of castration on luteinizing hormone and follicle-stimulating hormone secretion by pituitary cells from male rats. *Endocrinology* 126: 2642-2649.
- Knobil E 1980 The neuroendocrine control of the menstrual cycle. *Recent Progress in Hormone Research* 36: 53-88.
- de Koning J, Tijssen AM & van Rees GP 1987 The involvement of ovarian factors in maintaining the pituitary glands of female rats in a state of low LH responsiveness to LHRH. *Journal of Endocrinology* 112: 265-273.
- de Koning J, Tijssen AM & van Rees GP 1989 The self-priming action of LHRH increases the low pituitary LH and FSH response caused by ovarian factors: observations in vitro. *Journal of Endocrinology* 120: 439-447.
- de Koning J 1995 Gonadotrophin surge-inhibiting/attenuating factor governs luteinizing hormone secretion during the ovarian cycle: physiology and pathology. *Human Reproduction* 10: 2854-2861.
- Koppelaar DW, Tijssen AM, van Dieten JA & de Koning J 1991 The self-priming action of LHRH is under negative FSH control through a factor released by the ovary: Observations in female rats in vivo. *Journal of Endocrinology* 129: 205-211.
- Koppelaar DW, Tijssen AM & de Koning J 1992 The effect of gonadotrophin surge-inhibiting factor on the self-priming action of gonadotrophin-releasing hormone in female rats in vitro. *Journal of Endocrinology* 134: 427-436.
- Koppelaar DW, van Dieten JA, Tijssen AM & de Koning J 1993 Induction of the gonadotrophin surge-inhibiting factor by FSH and its elimination: a sex difference in the efficacy of the priming effect of gonadotrophin-releasing hormone on the rat pituitary gland. *Journal of Endocrinology* 138: 191-201.
- Levine JE, Chappell PE, Schneider JS, Sleiter NC & Szabo M 2001 Progesterone receptors as neuroendocrine integrators. *Frontiers in Neuroendocrinology* 22: 69-106.

- Littman BA & Hodgen GD 1984 Human menopausal gonadotropin stimulation in monkeys: blockade of the luteinizing hormone surge by a highly transient ovarian factor. *Fertility and Sterility* 41: 440-447.
- Messinis IE & Templeton A 1986 The effect of pulsatile follicle stimulating hormone on the endogenous luteinizing hormone surge in women. *Clinical Endocrinology* 25: 633-640.
- Messinis IE, Templeton A & Baird DT 1986 Relationships between the characteristics of endogenous luteinizing hormone surge and the degree of ovarian hyperstimulation during superovulation induction in women. *Clinical Endocrinology* 25: 393-400.
- Messinis IE & Templeton A 1987 Effect of high dose exogenous oestrogen on midcycle luteinizing hormone surge in human spontaneous cycles. *Clinical Endocrinology* 27: 453-459.
- Messinis IE & Templeton A 1988 The endocrine consequences of multiple folliculogenesis. *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility* (Suppl.) 36: 27-37.
- Messinis IE & Templeton A 1989 Pituitary response to exogenous LHRH in superovulated women. *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility* 87: 633-639.
- Messinis IE, Hirsch P & Templeton A 1991 Follicle stimulating hormone stimulates the production of gonadotrophin surge attenuating factor (GnSAF) in vivo. *Clinical Endocrinology* 35: 403-407.
- Messinis IE, Lolis D, Papadopoulos L, Tsahalina T, Papanikolaou N, Seferiadis K & Templeton A 1993 Effect of varying concentrations of follicle stimulating hormone on the production of gonadotrophin surge attenuating factor (GnSAF) in women. *Clinical Endocrinology* 39: 45-50.
- Messinis IE, Lolis D, Zikopoulos K, Tsahalina E, Seferiadis K & Templeton AA. 1994 Effect of an increase in FSH on the production of gonadotrophin-surge-attenuating factor in women. *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility* 101: 689-95.
- Messinis IE, Lolis D, Zikopoulos K, Milingos S, Kollios G, Seferiadis K & Templeton A 1996 Effect of follicle stimulating hormone or human chorionic gonadotrophin treatment on the production of gonadotrophin surge attenuating factor (GnSAF) during the luteal phase of the human menstrual cycle. *Clinical Endocrinology* 44: 169-175.
- Messinis IE 2006 Ovarian feedback, mechanism of action and possible clinical implications. *Human Reproduction Update* 12: 557-571.
- Mroueh JM, Arbogast LK, Fowler P, Templeton AA, Friedman CI & Danforth DR 1996 Identification of gonadotrophin surge-inhibiting factor (GnSIF)/attenuin in human follicular fluid. *Human Reproduction* 11: 490-496.
- Muttukrishna S, Fowler PA, Groome NP, Mitchell GG, Robertson WR & Knight PG 1994 Serum concentrations of dimeric inhibin during the spontaneous human menstrual cycle and after treatment with exogenous gonadotrophin. *Human Reproduction* 9: 1634-1642.
- Pappa A, Seferiadis K, Fotsis T, Shevchenko A, Marselos M, Tsolas O & Messinis IE 1999 Purification of a candidate gonadotrophin surge attenuating factor from human follicular fluid. *Human Reproduction* 14: 1449-1456.
- Ramey JW, Highsmith RF, Wilfinger WW & Baldwin DM 1987 The effects of gonadotropin-releasing hormone and estradiol on luteinizing hormone biosynthesis in cultured rat anterior pituitary cells. *Endocrinology* 120: 1503-1513.

- Ruiz A, Aguilar R, Tébar M, Gaytán F & Sánchez-Criado JE 1996 RU486-treated rats show endocrine and morphological responses to therapies analogous to responses of women with polycystic ovary syndrome treated with similar therapies. *Biology of Reproduction* 55: 1284-1291.
- Sanchez-Criado JE, Ruiz A, Tebar M & Mattheij JA 1996 Follicular and luteal progesterone synergize to maintain 5-day cyclicity in rats. *Revista Española de Fisiología* 52: 223-229.
- Sánchez-Criado JE, Garrido-Gracia JC, Bellido C, Aguilar R, Guelmes P, Abreu P, Alonso R, Barranco I, Millán Y & de Las Mulas JM 2006 Oestradiol-17 β inhibits tamoxifen-induced LHRH self-priming blocking hormone-dependent and ligand-independent activation of the gonadotrope progesterone receptor in the rat. *Journal of Endocrinology* 190: 73-84.
- Sarkar D, Chiappa SA, Fink G & Sherwood NM 1976 Gonadotropin-releasing hormone surge in pro-oestrous rats. *Nature* 264: 461-463.
- Schenken RS, Anderson WH & Hodgen GD 1984 Follicle-stimulating hormone increases ovarian vein nonsteroidal factors with gonadotropin-inhibiting activity. *Fertility and Sterility* 42: 785-790.
- Schwartz NB 2000 Neuroendocrine regulation of reproductive cyclicity. En *Neuroendocrinology in Physiology and Medicine*, pp 135-145. Eds PMConn & ME Freeman. Totowa, NJ: Humana Press Inc.
- Schuiling GA, Valkhof N & Koiter TR 1999 FSH inhibits the augmentation by oestradiol of the pituitary responsiveness to GnRH in the female rat. *Human Reproduction* 14: 21-26.
- Scott RS & Burger HG 1981 Mechanism of action of inhibin. *Biology of Reproduction* 24: 541-550.
- Seo SH & Danforth DR 1994 Porcine granulosa cells produce gonadotropin surge inhibiting factor (GnSIF) activity in vitro. *Serono Symposia Xth Ovarian Workshop*. Raven Press, New York, p 62.
- Sopelak VM & Hodgen GD 1984 Blockade of the estrogen-induced luteinizing hormone surge in monkeys: a nonsteroidal, antigenic factor in porcine follicular fluid. *Fertility and Sterility* 41: 108-113.
- Sorsa-Leslie T, Mason HD, Harris WJ & Fowler PA 2005 Selection of gonadotrophin surge attenuating factor phage antibodies by bioassay. *Reproductive Biology and Endocrinology* 3: 49.
- Speight A, Popkin R, Watts AG & Fink G 1981 Oestradiol-17 β increases pituitary responsiveness by a mechanism that involves the release and the priming effect of luteinizing hormone releasing factor. *Journal of Endocrinology* 88: 301-308.
- Takimoto GS & Horwitz KB 1993 Progesterone receptor phosphorylation: Complexities in defining a functional role. *Trends in Endocrinology and Metabolism* 4: 1-7.
- Tavoulari S, Frilingos S, Karatza P, Messinis IE & Seferiadis K 2004 The recombinant subdomain IIIB of human serum albumin displays activity of gonadotrophin surge-attenuating factor. *Human Reproduction* 19: 849-858.
- Tebar M, Ruiz A, Bellido C & Sanchez-Criado JE 1996 Ovary mediates the effects of RU486 given during proestrus on the diestrous secretion of luteinizing hormone in the rat. *Biology of Reproduction* 54: 1266-1270.

- Tebar M, Ruiz A & Sanchez-Criado JE 1998 Involvement of estrogen and follicle-stimulating hormone on basal and luteinizing hormone (LH)-releasing hormone-stimulated LH secretion in RU-486-induced 3-day estrous cycle in the rat. *Biology of Reproduction* 58: 615-619.
- Tijssen AM, Helder MN, Chu ZW & de Koning J 1997 Intracellular antagonistic interaction between GnRH and gonadotrophin surge-inhibiting/attenuating factor bioactivity downstream of second messengers involved in the self-priming process. *Journal of Reproduction and Fertility* 111: 235-242.
- Tio S, Koppenaal D, Bardin CW & Cheng CY 1994 Purification of gonadotropin surge-inhibiting factor from Sertoli cell-enriched culture medium. *Biochemical and Biophysical Research Communications* 199: 1229-1236.
- Tse A, Tse FW, Almers W & Hille B 1993 Rhythmic exocytosis stimulated by GnRH-induced calcium oscillations in rat gonadotropes. *Science* 260: 82-84.
- Turgeon JL & Waring DW 1994 Activation of the progesterone receptor by the gonadotropin-releasing hormone self-priming signaling pathway. *Molecular Endocrinology* 8: 860-869.
- Vegeto E, Shahbaz MM, Wen DX, Goldman ME, O'Malley BW & McDonnell DP 1993 Human progesterone receptor A form is a cell- and promoter-specific repressor of human progesterone receptor B function. *Molecular Endocrinology* 7: 1244-55.
- Waring DW & Turgeon JL 1980 Luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone-induced luteinizing hormone secretion in vitro: cyclic changes in responsiveness and self-priming. *Endocrinology* 106: 1430-1436.
- Watanabe G, Taya K & Sasamoto S 1990 Dynamics of ovarian inhibin secretion during the oestrous cycle of the rat. *Journal of Endocrinology* 126: 151-157.
- Wen DX, Xu YF, Mais DE, Goldman ME & McDonnell DP 1994 The A and B isoforms of the human progesterone receptor operate through distinct signaling pathways within target cells. *Molecular and Cellular Biology* 14: 8356-8364.
- Whitehead SA 1990 A gonadotrophin surge attenuating factor? *Journal of Endocrinology* 126: 1-4.
- Yen SS, Tsai CC, Vandenberg G & Rebar R 1972 Gonadotropin dynamics in patients with gonadal dysgenesis: a model for the study of gonadotropin regulation. *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism* 35: 897-904.



Update on Mechanisms of Hormone Action - Focus on Metabolism, Growth and Reproduction

Edited by Prof. Gianluca Aimaretti

ISBN 978-953-307-341-5

Hard cover, 470 pages

Publisher InTech

Published online 26, October, 2011

Published in print edition October, 2011

The purpose of the present volume is to focus on more recent aspects of the complex regulation of hormonal action, in particular in 3 different hot fields: metabolism, growth and reproduction. Modern approaches to the physiology and pathology of endocrine glands are based on cellular and molecular investigation of genes, peptide, hormones, protein cascade at different levels. In all of the chapters in the book all, or at least some, of these aspects are described in order to increase the endocrine knowledge.

How to reference

In order to correctly reference this scholarly work, feel free to copy and paste the following:

Ana Gordon, José C. Garrido-Gracia, Rafaela Aguilar, Carmina Bellido, Juana Martín de las Mulas and José E. Sánchez-Criado (2011). Attenuin: What It Is, How It Works and What It Does, Update on Mechanisms of Hormone Action - Focus on Metabolism, Growth and Reproduction, Prof. Gianluca Aimaretti (Ed.), ISBN: 978-953-307-341-5, InTech, Available from: <http://www.intechopen.com/books/update-on-mechanisms-of-hormone-action-focus-on-metabolism-growth-and-reproduction/attenuin-what-it-is-how-it-works-and-what-it-does>

INTech
open science | open minds

InTech Europe

University Campus STeP Ri
Slavka Krautzeka 83/A
51000 Rijeka, Croatia
Phone: +385 (51) 770 447
Fax: +385 (51) 686 166
www.intechopen.com

InTech China

Unit 405, Office Block, Hotel Equatorial Shanghai
No.65, Yan An Road (West), Shanghai, 200040, China
中国上海市延安西路65号上海国际贵都大饭店办公楼405单元
Phone: +86-21-62489820
Fax: +86-21-62489821

© 2011 The Author(s). Licensee IntechOpen. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

IntechOpen

IntechOpen