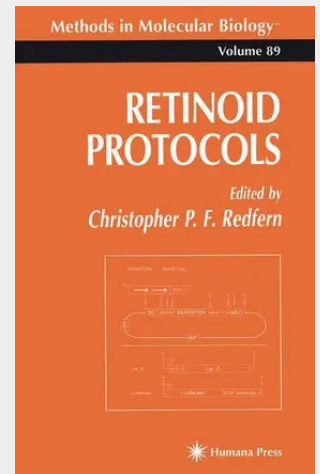


Retinoid Protocols

Interest in retinoic acid, the main biologically active derivative of vitamin A or retinol, increased dramatically between 1989 and 1993, following the cloning of nuclear receptors or RARs reported in 1987 (Fig. 1). Important discoveries since then have shown how RARs work as all-trans retinoic acid-dependent heterodimers with related nuclear receptors for 9-cis retinoic acid called RXRs. This has stimulated the development of synthetic analogs specific for each type of receptor, and opens the way to develop new methods for regulating pharmacologically the activity of retinoic acid-dependent pathways of gene activation. The potential for the development of new drugs by the pharmaceutical industry is now a major factor driving forward our understanding of vitamin A-regulated pathways in animal development and homeostasis. However, apart from the real potential of retinoid analogs as novel pharmacological agents, there remains the considerable intellectual challenge of understanding the way in which vitamin A and its derivatives function in cell development and differentiation. Retinoid Protocols is an attempt to bring together various methodologies that will be vital for rising to this challenge in the future. Retinoid molecular biology has few methods of its own, but is reliant on standard molecular biology methods applied to this particular research area.

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