

## Preface

This Special Issue is a unique effort to take snapshots of a rapidly moving field of membrane biology, the structure and function of the ATP-binding cassette (ABC) transporters. ABC transporters were first named as such in a review by C.F. Higgins and colleagues in *Nature* about 10 years ago, and by now hundreds of proteins, within the many kingdoms of living organisms, have been recognised as belonging to this fast-growing family. Various primary active transporters, membrane channels and transport regulators belong to this group, and some common structural motifs and functional features join them in a highly interesting and important team.

In this Special Issue, each review is an independent contribution, which should be readable and understandable in itself. We have made no effort to alter or adjust the individual reviews; we simply asked the leading experts of the field to submit an overview of their current understanding of the proteins or group of proteins closest to their hearts. This may result in some repetition, or even controversy between the reviews, but this was unavoidable if we wished to provide the readers with the most recent data and ideas. We also asked some of the authors to give an inventory of the currently known ABC transporters in a given group of organisms, so as to help the readers

to find their pet ABC proteins for future specific or comparative studies. A special effort was made to ask the contributors, whenever relevant, to emphasise the medical importance of these proteins.

As happens with such snapshots, some of the pictures, taken in a wider time-frame, may be somewhat blurred because the parts or objects are moving far too rapidly. In other cases, the time-frame selected might have been too narrow, which resulted in some reviews being in tight focus but lacking discussion of the ramifications of current developments. Taking all these possible drawbacks into account, we feel that this Special Issue in its current form may be useful for both kinds of readers – specialists and generalists alike. A major advantage of this Issue is that, due to the successful effort of BBA, its production was very efficient and rapid, and thus no significant delay occurred in the publication of the reviews. We thank BBA for this, and are especially grateful for the high quality contribution each author made to this review Issue.

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