



Cell Adhesion (Handbook of Experimental Pharmacology)

Jürgen Behrens, Warren James Nelson

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As with other areas of biological research, the progress that has been made over the past 25 years in the field of cell adhesion is impressive. In the late 1970s, the search for specific cell surface receptors for adhesion processes was initiated - ing mainly biochemical and immunological approaches. Since then, the introduction of novel methods of cellular and molecular biology and powerful techniques for manipulating gene expression in transgenic and knock-out mice have greatly advanced the field. Not only do we now know the precise molecular structure of many of the cell adhesion receptors that were postulated to exist in the early days, but we have a clear picture of their function, and evidence of their involvement in signal transduction. We have also found clues to the role of cell adhesion in normal embryonal development and adult physiology, and we have evidence that disturbance in cell adhesion can cause disease. In this volume, our goal was to provide an overview of the main topics of current cell adhesion research, including structural analyses of cell adhesion molecules and studies of their functional role in vitro and in vivo. We have focussed mainly on the four major families of cell-adhesion receptors, i. e. the cadherins, the integrins, the Ig superfamily and the selectin-based adhesion system. The chapters by Perez and Nelson and Choi and Weis describe the structural basis of cadherin function, focussing on the extracellular domain of cadherins and the cytoplasmic tail interactions with catenins, respectively.

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