



THE MANY FACES OF RNA

**D S EGGLESTON, C D PRESCOTT
AND N D PEARSON**



Academic Press

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ACADEMIC PRESS

San Diego London Boston New York
Sydney Tokyo Toronto

ACADEMIC PRESS INC
525B Street
Suite 1900
San Diego, CA 92101, USA

ACADEMIC PRESS LIMITED
24-28 Oval Road
LONDON
NW1 7DX, UK

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library
ISBN 0-12-233210-5

Typeset by Laser Words, Madras, India
Printed and bound in Great Britain by
MPG Books Limited, Bodmin, Cornwall

98 99 00 01 02 03 EB 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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Introduction

The Many Faces of RNA, Cambridge, March 1997

The Many Faces of RNA served as the subject for the eighth in a series of SmithKline Beecham Pharmaceuticals Research Symposia, held at Robinson College, Cambridge in March 1997. Our primary purpose in sponsoring these symposia, in alternate years between the United States and the United Kingdom, is to highlight a rapidly developing area of scientific investigation with the potential to impact the discovery of therapeutic modalities in a heretofore underappreciated or underdeveloped way. These gatherings are conceived as a vehicle for focus on an area of scientific investigation which, for any number of reasons, may only now be achieving a level of interest and support commensurate with increased attention by the pharmaceutical industry as a whole and SmithKline Beecham particularly. In short, a field which is 'hotting up'. The style and format are deliberately designed to promote in-depth presentations and discussions and to facilitate the forging of collaborations between academic and industrial partners. In addition, we hope that the symposium will benefit the student community by exposing a current theme of interest to the pharmaceutical industry, thereby highlighting it as a field ripe for future study. This book gathers together written versions of the oral presentations, which comprised the bulk of the meeting contents, and abstracts for the plethora of poster presentations which complemented those efforts and further fostered interaction between participants.

Previous topics in the series have included 'Chirality in Drug Design', 'Genomes, Molecular Biology and Drug Discovery', 'Neurodegeneration' and 'Organometallic Reagents in Organic Synthesis', among others. Traditionally the themes have alternated between a biological and a chemical topic; however, in designing this year's symposium it was clear that a blend of the two was the only way forward. We attempted to be broad in the scope of science reviewed, in keeping with the myriad functions of RNA, but were unescapably constrained by the amount of time available and breadth which could have been covered. Thus some current and highly relevant topics had to be excluded out of sheer necessity (for example, antisense technology, the fascinating phenomena of RNA editing and processing, the use of the unnatural enantiomer of RNA to facilitate the design of diagnostic tools and biological screens and the whole area of RNA virology). Instead we chose to combine presentations which would offer a