

PREFACE

Research on "essential" phospholipids (EPL) has already attained but not yet accomplished its history. In the year 1989 it was 50 years since Hans Eikermann extracted the highly purified fraction of phosphatidylcholine molecules from soya beans. During these 50 years dozens of symposia and scientific meetings took place, and hundreds of publications appeared. Although a large number of texts on EPL have been published so far (mainly in the form of proceedings of scientific conferences), an up-dated and systematic scientific presentation reflecting all the achievements of EPL has still been missing. Therefore, this book describing all the results obtained from both experimental and clinical studies on EPL should be greatly appreciated. Moreover, some prospects of studies showing issues to be solved (strictly scientific questions like immunological and receptor studies) and practical problems, such as new principles of dosage, new galenic forms or new indications, have also been pointed out. Another value of this book is the fact that some theoretical issues and practical indications have been consistently combined.

The title of the book as well as the titles of the chapters constitute a recapitulation of the existing knowledge on EPL, which with its special and main ingredient - dilinoleoylphosphatidylcholine - is of great importance in all diseases characterized by damaged membrane structures, reduced phospholipid contents and/or reduced membrane fluidity. The titles of the main chapters (phospholipids in the human membrane, the "essential" phospholipids, mode of action of EPL, pharmacological investigations, clinical studies) only give a general view, while careful reading presents a broad range of indications to the reader: liver and kidney diseases, dyslipidemia and atherosclerosis, gestosis, gastric and intestinal inflammation, neurologic disorders, lung and skin diseases.

For a clinical pharmacologist the results of pharmacokinetic investigations (absorption of the ¹⁴C-labelled substance after oral administration) are of special interest as well as the fact that 1,2-dilinoleoylphosphatidylcholine, which is physiologically present in the human body only in trace amounts, may substitute endogenous phospholipids and be incorporated into all membrane-containing fractions, thus improving the fluidity of membranes.

Summing up, the book is a broad source of modern knowledge on EPL and an interesting publication from both theoretical and practical points of view. It can also serve as an inspiration to start further studies on EPL.

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