

# BS252-12 Molecular Endocrinology

**20/21**

**Department**

Life Sciences

**Level**

Undergraduate Level 2

**Module leader**

Kevin Moffat

**Credit value**

12

**Module duration**

5 weeks

**Assessment**

100% exam

**Study location**

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

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## Description

### Introductory description

This module is designed as a foundation for the further study of endocrinology at the cellular & molecular level as well as providing a firm basis for understanding normal hormonal control. The module will describe basic endocrinology and its regulation in man. Where appropriate, the underlying pathologies of important endocrine diseases will be discussed. The module will provide a basic understanding of the molecular mechanisms of hormone action and will include a description of some of the main hormone receptors and their signal transduction pathways, e.g. the insulin receptor (tyrosine kinase receptor). Topics will include: function of pituitary gland and hypothalamus, function of adrenal and thyroid glands, female reproductive endocrinology including endocrine control of pregnancy; pancreas and insulin; calcium homeostasis, and endocrine function of the gastrointestinal tract.

[Module web page](#)

### Module aims

The module will introduce students to major areas of molecular endocrinology and underlying pathologies of endocrine diseases. This module provides a basic understanding of the molecular mechanism of hormone action and includes a description of the main hormone receptors and their signal transduction pathways.

## Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

**Lecture 1: Overview and introduction to endocrinology (Dr. K. G. Moffat)** This lecture will introduce the very basic principles of endocrinology. Topics covered will include the chemical nature, synthesis, transport and mechanism of action of the major hormones. An overview of the different classes of hormone receptors and intracellular signalling mechanisms will be discussed.

**Lectures 2-3: The HPA axis (Dr.M. Bolborea)** This pair of lectures will describe the details of and the hormones produced by the hypothalamus, the pituitary and the adrenals. This information will be related to how the system is regulated at the whole body level and at the level of the individual glands. Finally, the physiological consequences of hormones released by the HPA will be discussed. Diseases such as Cushing's syndrome and Addison's disease will be discussed. Some aspects of genes regulated by the HPA axis may be discussed.

**Lectures 4-6: Insulin, somatostatin and glucagon (Dr. K. G. Moffat)** Insulin is the major hormone involved in the regulation of energy metabolism. Secreted from  $\beta$ -cells of the pancreatic islet, insulin is an anabolic hormone that affects an array of metabolic processes. These lectures will examine insulin secretion and action. We will examine how insulin is synthesised, processed and released. The effect of insulin on target tissues will be examined both at the level of the receptor and sub-cellular signalling events, and in terms of the metabolic repercussions of this key hormone. Counter-regulatory effects of glucagon will be discussed, along with other local hormonal communication present within the islet.

**Lectures 7-8: Gut hormones (Dr. K. G. Moffat)** These lectures will present the major hormones controlling secretion, motility and digestion in the GI Tract, to include: how acid secretion is controlled in the stomach and what regulates gastrointestinal motility?

**Lecture 9: Adipose hormones - fat as an endocrine organ (Dr. K. G. Moffat)** • What is fat? Distinguish the cells of adipose tissue and the different fat depots throughout the body. • Understand the involvement of adipose-secreted molecules and their effects on other organs and systems. • Disorders stemming from adipocyte-derived factors.

**Lectures 10-12: Sex hormones (Dr. A. M. Blanks)** In these lectures, the sexual differentiation and the roles of the hypothalamus (GnRH), pituitary (LH, FSH and Prolactin) and gonads (oestrogen and progesterone) in the control of reproduction will be described. The molecular mechanisms underlying the initiation of puberty and the consequences of oestrogen deficiency, which occur at the menopause will be discussed. The placental (human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG), estrogen and progesterone) and fetal (oxytocin and prostaglandins) hormones will be discussed with reference to their role in maintenance of pregnancy, labour and lactation. The effects of pregnancy on maternal nonsexual endocrine glands will also be discussed.

**Lecture 13: The thyroid and thyroid hormone (Dr. P. Young)** The thyroid hormones regulate the metabolic activity of almost all cells and are needed for normal growth and development. This lecture will examine the synthesis and action of the thyroid hormones. The consequences of abnormal thyroid function will also be discussed.

Lecture 14: The parathyroid and Ca<sup>2+</sup>-homeostasis (Dr. P. Young) Calcium plays a fundamental role in a number of physiological functions. Three hormones primarily regulate the control of calcium homeostasis: parathyroid hormone, calcitonin and vitamin D. This lecture will concentrate on the parathyroid gland and the interactions between parathyroid hormone and vitamin D. It will use specific diseases to illustrate their interactions.

Lecture 15: Endocrine signalling (Dr. K. G. Moffat) REVISION The major hormones will be discussed by reference to the downstream signal transduction pathways and second messengers that they activate. Thus the activation of nuclear hormone receptors, cAMP cascade, phospholipase C, RTKs and mitogen activated protein kinase cascades will be examined in respect of specific hormone receptors.

## **Learning outcomes**

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- To understand general principles of human endocrine. To appreciate integration of these signalling elements both within the target cell and between systems to efficiently regulate function. To understand how pharmacology acts at the level of the receptor and to appreciate its use and limitations in the control of common disease conditions

## **Indicative reading list**

Rang, H. P., Ritter, J. M.,  
Flower, R. J. and Henderson, G.  
Rang and Dale's Pharmacology  
8th Edition 2016  
Churchill Livingstone  
ISBN: 978-0-7020-5362-7

Students are directed to the current literature for an up-to-date appreciation of developments in this area

## **Subject specific skills**

Understand the general principles of cell signalling

Understand the basic organisation of the endocrine system

Understand the HPA-axis and the function of the pituitary in integrating hypothalamic-to-hormonal signals

Understand insulin secretion and signalling to regulate energy homeostasis and metabolism

Understand the role of various other endocrine signals, including PTH, thyroxine and sex hormones

## **Transferable skills**

Adult learning

Self Directed Learning

## Study

### Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	15 sessions of 1 hour (12%)
Private study	105 hours (88%)
Total	120 hours

### Private study description

Self directed learning and revision for the final exam

### Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

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## Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

### Assessment group B1

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
In-person Examination	100%		No
• Answerbook Green (8 page)			

Reassessment component is the same

### Feedback on assessment

Pastoral meetings with personal tutors.

[Past exam papers for BS252](#)

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## Availability

### Courses

This module is Optional for:

- UBSA-C1B9 Undergraduate Biomedical Science
  - Year 2 of C1B9 Biomedical Science
  - Year 2 of C1B9 Biomedical Science
  - Year 2 of C1B9 Biomedical Science
- ULFA-C1A3 Undergraduate Biomedical Science (MBio)
  - Year 2 of C1A3 Biomedical Science
  - Year 2 of C1B9 Biomedical Science
- Year 2 of ULFA-C1A7 Undergraduate Biomedical Science with Industrial Placement (MBio)
- Year 2 of UBSA-CB19 Undergraduate Biomedical Science with Intercalated Year