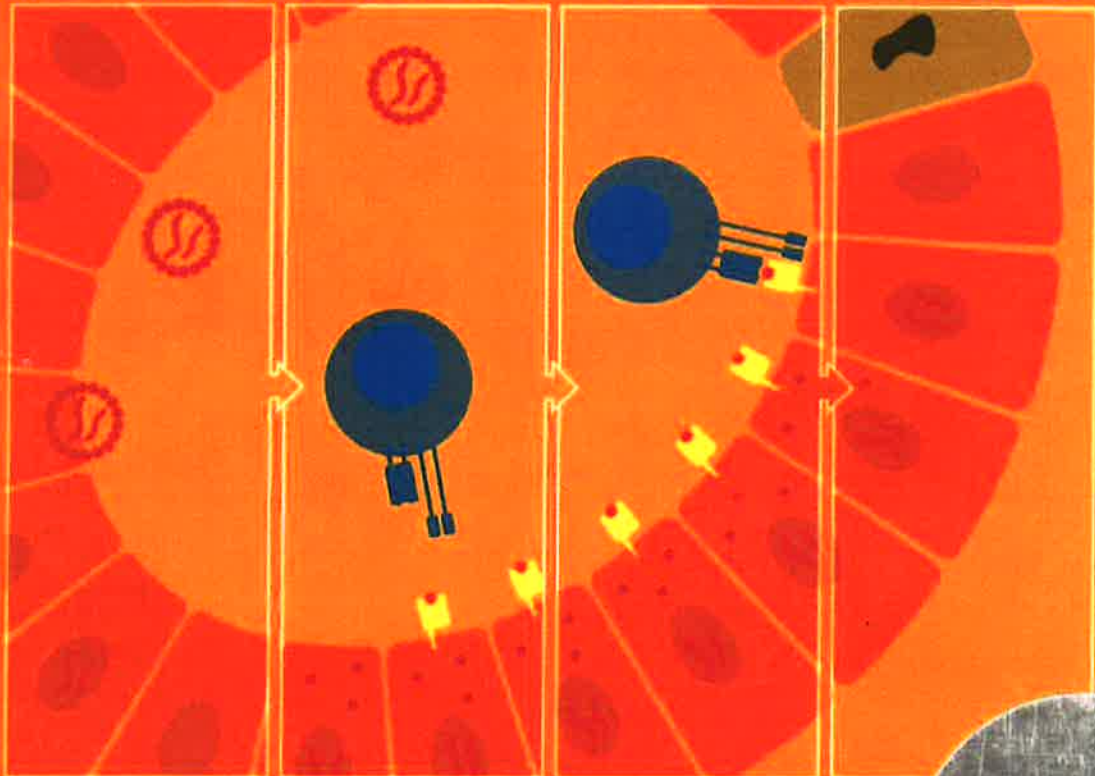


immuno biology **5**

THE IMMUNE SYSTEM IN HEALTH AND DISEASE



FIFTH EDITION



CHARLES A JANEWAY • PAUL TRAVERS
MARK WALPORT • MARK SHLOMCHIK

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Illustration and Layout: Blink Studio, London
Manufacturing: Marlon Morrow, Rory MacDonald

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Distributors:

Inside North America: Garland Publishing, 29 West 35th Street,
New York, NY 10001-2299.

Inside Japan: Nankodo Co. Ltd., 42-6, Hongo 3-Chrome, Bunkyo-ku,
Tokyo, 113-8410, Japan.

Outside North America and Japan: Churchill Livingstone, Robert Stevenson House,
1-3 Baxter's Place, Leith Walk, Edinburgh, EH1 3AF.

ISBN 0 8153 3642 X (paperback) Garland
ISBN 0 4430 7098 9 (paperback) Churchill Livingstone
ISBN 0 4430 7099 7 (paperback) International Student Edition

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Immunobiology : the immune system in health and disease / Charles A. Janeway, Jr. ...
[et al.].-- 5th ed.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-8153-3642-X (pbk.)

1. Immunology. 2. Immunity. I. Janeway, Charles. II. Title.

QR181 .I454 2001
616.07'9--dc21

2001016039

This book was produced using QuarkXpress 4.11 and Adobe Illustrator 9.0

Published by Garland Publishing, a member of the Taylor & Francis Group,
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001-2299.

Printed in the United States of America.
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2

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Immunologists' Toolbox

APPENDIX I

Immunization.

Natural adaptive immune responses are normally directed at antigens borne by pathogenic microorganisms. The immune system can, however, also be induced to respond to simple nonliving antigens, and experimental immunologists have focused on the responses to these simple antigens in developing our understanding of the immune response. The deliberate induction of an immune response is known as **immunization**. Experimental immunizations are routinely carried out by injecting the test antigen into the animal or human subject. The route, dose, and form in which antigen is administered can profoundly affect whether a response occurs and the type of response that is produced, and are considered in Sections A-1-A-4. The induction of protective immune responses against common microbial pathogens in humans is often called **vaccination**, although this term is correctly only applied to the induction of immune responses against smallpox by immunizing with the cross-reactive cowpox virus, *vaccinia* (see Chapter 14).

To determine whether an immune response has occurred and to follow its course, the immunized individual is monitored for the appearance of immune reactants directed at the specific antigen. Immune responses to most antigens elicit the production of both specific antibodies and specific effector T cells. Monitoring the antibody response usually involves the analysis of relatively crude preparations of **antiserum** (plural: **antisera**). The **serum** is the fluid phase of clotted blood, which, if taken from an immunized individual, is called antiserum because it contains specific antibodies against the immunizing antigen as well as other soluble serum proteins. To study immune responses mediated by T cells, blood lymphocytes or cells from lymphoid organs such as the spleen are tested; T-cell responses are more commonly studied in experimental animals than in humans.

Any substance that can elicit an immune response is said to be **immunogenic** and is called an **immunogen**. There is a clear operational distinction between an immunogen and an antigen. An **antigen** is defined as any substance that can bind to a specific antibody. All antigens therefore have the potential to elicit specific antibodies, but some need to be attached to an immunogen in order to do so. This means that although all immunogens are antigens, not all antigens are immunogenic. The antigens used most frequently in experimental immunology are proteins, and antibodies to proteins are of enormous utility in experimental biology and medicine. Purified proteins are, however, not always highly immunogenic and to provoke an immune response have to be administered with an adjuvant (see Section A-4). Carbohydrates, nucleic acids, and other types of molecule are all potential antigens, but will often only induce an immune response if attached to a protein carrier. Thus, the immunogenicity of protein antigens determines the outcome of virtually every immune response.

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