

Preface

There has been a major explosion in our interest in cytokines and their roles in regulating the function of the immune system in the past five to ten years. At the same time there has been a similar dramatic increase in research into the roles played by other growth factors in animal cell physiology. However, there are so many other factors (we have counted over 130—see *Appendix 1*) and they play so many roles that drawing them together as a group has proven quite difficult. Nevertheless we think we have got the balance between describing the detailed activities of individual factors and describing protocols which are appropriate to a wide range of factors just about right.

Although we have included the cytokines in our list of growth factors (*Appendix 1*), we have avoided protocols relating specifically to cytokines and this volume should be seen as complementary to the volume *Cytokines: A Practical Approach* in the same series.

We would like to thank all the contributors, especially those who got their manuscripts in by the deadline, and the staff past and present at OUP, who have been very pleasant and helpful throughout. We would also like to give special thanks to Paul Stroobant who helped tremendously with the list of factors in *Appendix 1*, and Mrs M. Cobbing who supplied many of the addresses in *Appendix 4*.

We would like to leave you with a final word of warning:

Growth factors are hard to purify and therefore expensive to buy. Details on how to look after your factors can be found in Chapters 3 and 6 but please read the manufacturer's instructions. We suggest you don't do what one researcher did to find out if he'd got his money's worth and run *all* your valuable recombinant factor on a polyacrylamide gel before fixing and staining it!

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