ISSN: 1987-6521, E-ISSN: 2346-7541
MARCH 2023 VOLUME 60 ISSUE 01
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BLACK SEA
SCIENTIFIC JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH

EXPLORING THE MOLECULAR ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURAL FEATURES OF THE CELL MEMBRANE

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Received: 28-Feb-2023, Manuscript No. BSSJAR- 23-92653; **Editor assigned:** 03-Mar-2023, PreQC No. BSSJAR- 23-92653 (PQ); **Reviewed:** 17-Mar-2023, QC No. BSSJAR- 23-92653; **Revised:** 24-Mar-2023, Manuscript No. BSSJAR- 23-92653 (R); **Published:** 31-Mar-2023, DOI: 10.36962/GBSSJAR/60.1.003

DESCRIPTION

A thin polar membrane comprised of two layers of lipid molecules is known as a lipid bilayer. These membranes are flat sheets that surround every cell in a continuous barrier. The nuclear membrane enclosing the cell nucleus and the membranes of the membrane-bound organelles in the cell are all made of a lipid bilayer, as are the cell membranes of practically all animals and many viruses. The lipid bilayer serves as a barrier, retaining ions, proteins, and other molecules where they are required while preventing their diffusion into unintended locations. Even though they're only a few nanometers wide, lipid bilayers are perfectly suited for this function since they are impenetrable to the majority of water-soluble compounds. Because bilayers are so impermeable to ions, cells may control salt concentrations and pH by moving ions across their membranes with the help of ion pump proteins.

Amphiphilic phospholipids with a hydrophilic phosphate head and a hydrophobic tail made up of two fatty acid chains often make up biological bilayers. For example, phospholipids with specific head groups can act as signals and "anchors" for other molecules in cell membranes, changing the surface chemistry of a bilayer. Like lipid heads, lipid tails can influence membrane characteristics, for example by influencing the phase of the bilayer. The chemical characteristics of the lipids' tails affect the temperature at which this happens. The bilayer can adopt a solid gel phase state at lower temperatures but phase transition to a fluid state at higher temperatures. The bilayer's mechanical characteristics, such as its resistance to stretching and bending, are also influenced by how the lipids are arranged within it. Artificial "model" bilayers made in a lab have been used to study many of these features. Drug delivery has also been done therapeutically using vesicles created by model bilayers.

Structure

In addition to the phospholipids that make up the bilayer that forms the structure of biological membranes, various other types of molecules are often present. Cholesterol, which helps to reinforce the bilayer and lessen its permeability, is a particularly significant example in animal cells. Moreover, cholesterol influences how some essential membrane proteins function. An annular lipid shell serves to firmly anchor integral membrane proteins to a lipid bilayer, which is necessary for their function. These membrane proteins are engaged in a variety of intra- and intercellular signaling activities because bilayers establish the boundaries of the cell and its compartments. The joining of two bilayers occurs as a result of specific membrane proteins. The combining of two separate structures is made possible by this fusion, as in the acrosome response during sperm fertilization of an egg or the entry of a virus into a cell. Lipid bilayers are difficult to investigate due to their fragility and invisibility under a conventional microscope. Advanced methods like atomic force microscopy and electron microscopy are frequently needed for experiments on bilayers.

Organization

Phospholipids form a two-layered sheet when they are in contact with water, with their hydrophobic tails pointing in its direction. This configuration yields two "leaflets," each of which is a single molecular layer. Apart from components like sugars and salts that dissolve in water, the center of this bilayer is virtually entirely devoid of water. The hydrophobic effect, which is

ISSN: 1987-6521, E-ISSN: 2346-7541
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the result of interactions between hydrophobic molecules, is what propels the assembly process. Water molecules can connect more freely with one another thanks to an increase in interactions between hydrophobic molecules that leads to the clustering of hydrophobic areas, raising the system's entropy. Non-covalent interactions including van der Waals forces, electrostatic interactions, and hydrogen bonds are all a part of this intricate process.

Citation: Ranganathan R. (2023). Exploring the Molecular Organization and Structural Features of the Cell Membrane. GBSSJAR. 60(1), 1-2. DOI: 10.36962/GBSSJAR/60.1.003