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Special Issue: Taurine: Discovered 185 years ago and still intrigues the scientific community

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Preface

Taurine (2-aminoethanesulfonic acid) is an ubiquitous amino acid present in the animal kingdom, but only rarely found in the plant world. The amino acid was originally isolated in the early 19th century from ox bile. Since 1968 when the first review was published, a myriad of publications and symposia proceedings have appeared in the literature devoted exclusively to the function and role of taurine. Based on the content of this special issue of *Amino Acids*, it is clear that taurine plays a prominent role in many physiologic processes and mammalian tissues. Among its many effects are the following: effects on cholesterol levels, polymorphonuclear phagocytosis activity in burn patients, interactions between taurine and ethanol in the central nervous system, antioxidant activity, effects on the antiinflammatory process, production of taurochloramine and its relationship to arthritis, and the treatment of hypertension. However, the diverse effects of taurine in different tissues and its numerous effects in various physiologic processes are difficult to rationalize. Thus, the discovery of a primary mechanism of action for taurine is the hope of all investigators.

The *7th International Congress on Amino Acids and Proteins* held in Vienna, August 6–10, 2001, devoted a one day session exclusively to "taurine". It is from this minisymposium that this *Amino Acid* special issue on taurine originates. However, additional manuscripts on taurine submitted subsequent to the Congress have also been included in this volume. We hope that the articles published in this special issue will continue to generate an interest in this unique biological agent and will further our understanding of this sulfur amino acid.

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