BIOCHEMICAL JOURNAL LETTERS

Nomenclature of hyaluronic acid

Balazs *et al.* (1986) have suggested that the polysaccharide 'hyaluronic acid' or 'hyaluronate' be redesignated as 'hyaluronan'. The thrust of their argument is apparently that in the absence of a corresponding cation, the name 'hyaluronate' is not correct. In my opinion this objection is not very strong as several metabolites, e.g. citric acid, lactic acid, etc., are named as anions without any mention of the cation associated with them. Moreover, in a recent article from the laboratory of one of the above authors (Tengblad *et al.*, 1986), the Na⁺ ion has been mentioned as a cation associated with hyaluronate. The name 'hyaluronan' appears to be rather incorrect since it gives a false impression that the polysaccharide is a homopolymer of a glycuronate whose identity also remains obscure in the suggested name. The correct name of this heteropolysaccharide, according to the recommendations of the

IUB-IUPAC Joint Commission on Biochemical Nomenclature (1982), should be 2-acetamido-2-deoxy-D-glucano-D-glucuronan. This being a little long, I suggest that the name 'hyaluronic acid', in analogy to pectic acid for D-galacturonan, be retained.

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