



The Importance of Androgens for Prostate Development

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Editorial

Androgen steroid hormones, including testosterone and dihydrotestosterone, are produced by the male gonads and have substantial effects on almost every system of the male body including development of the sex-accessory glands, in particular, the prostate. During male sexual differentiation, androgens are necessary to properly pattern the embryonic prostate buds. Androgens are continuously important for adult prostate function and homeostasis. In the adult prostate, androgens are involved in regulation of inappropriate prostate growth during benign prostate hyperplasia and contribute to progression of prostate cancer. On the other hand, a number of studies indicate that androgen signaling is necessary to promote prostate induction and differentiation but is dispensable for glandular growth and branching.

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In summary, current understanding of prostate development indicates that although androgens are important for prostate induction and homeostasis, they are unlikely to be directly involved in executing prostate growth and branching programs. This does not preclude a possibility that androgen signaling ensures patterning and survival of particular prostate progenitor cells in the prostate epithelial buds and adjacent mesenchyme which then carry out the branching morphogenesis program by activating developmental mechanisms. Investigations into prostate development hold substantive translational value. A better understanding of prostate development not only promises to improve comprehension of how androgens pattern the male body plan, but may also shed light on the mechanisms of androgen function during inappropriate prostate overgrowth in benign prostatic hyperplasia and prostate cancer.

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