Biopolymers Research

Akansha, Biopolymers Res 2024, 8:2

Review Article Open Access

Unravelling the Mysteries of RNA Biology: Deciphering the Code of Life's Silent Partner

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Abstract

In the grand narrative of molecular biology, DNA often takes center stage as the genetic blueprint of life, while proteins command the spotlight as the molecular workhorses executing cellular functions. Yet, amidst this spotlight, a quiet protagonist silently orchestrates the intricate dance of cellular processes: RNA. RNA biology, a vibrant and rapidly evolving field, delves into the multifaceted roles of RNA molecules in gene expression, regulation, and cellular function. From the discovery of messenger RNA (mRNA) as the intermediary between DNA and protein synthesis to the elucidation of non-coding RNAs as key players in gene regulation, RNA biology has emerged as a cornerstone of modern biology, offering profound insights into the intricacies of life's molecular machinery.

Keywords: RNA Biology; Life; Central Dogma

Introduction

At the heart of RNA biology lies the central dogma of molecular biology, which outlines the flow of genetic information within cells. According to this dogma, DNA serves as the repository of genetic information, harboring the instructions necessary for synthesizing proteins. This information is transcribed into RNA molecules through a process known as transcription, catalyzed by the enzyme RNA polymerase [1,2].

Methodology

The transcribed RNA molecules, known as messenger RNAs (mRNAs), carry the genetic code from the nucleus to the cytoplasm, where they serve as templates for protein synthesis in a process called translation. Ribosomes, molecular machines composed of RNA and protein, read the sequence of nucleotides in the mRNA and assemble amino acids into polypeptide chains, ultimately giving rise to functional proteins [3-5].

Beyond the messenger: diverse roles of rna molecules

While mRNA serves as the intermediary between DNA and protein, RNA molecules encompass a diverse array of species with varied functions beyond protein synthesis. One of the most notable examples is ribosomal RNA (rRNA), a structural component of ribosomes essential for protein synthesis. Transfer RNA (tRNA) molecules, on the other hand, serve as adaptors that deliver amino acids to the ribosome during translation, ensuring accurate protein synthesis.

In addition to these well-characterized RNA species, the past few decades have witnessed the discovery of a myriad of non-coding RNAs (ncRNAs) with diverse regulatory functions. These include microRNAs (miRNAs), small interfering RNAs (siRNAs), long non-coding RNAs (lncRNAs), and circular RNAs (circRNAs), among others. These ncRNAs play critical roles in gene regulation, chromatin remodeling, RNA processing, and post-transcriptional modification, adding layers of complexity to the regulatory landscape of the cell.

RNA as a regulatory hub: from gene expression to cellular fate

The discovery of ncRNAs has revolutionized our understanding of gene regulation and cellular function, revealing RNA molecules as central players in orchestrating diverse biological processes. miRNAs, for instance, regulate gene expression by binding to complementary sequences in target mRNAs, leading to their degradation or translational repression. This post-transcriptional regulation governs diverse cellular processes such as development, differentiation, and homeostasis [6-8].

Similarly, lncRNAs have emerged as key regulators of gene expression, modulating chromatin structure, transcriptional activity, and mRNA processing. These multifunctional molecules can act as scaffolds, guides, or decoys, interacting with proteins, DNA, and other RNAs to fine-tune gene expression programs and cellular responses to internal and external cues.

Moreover, circRNAs have garnered attention for their unique circular structure and diverse regulatory functions. These covalently closed RNA molecules exhibit remarkable stability and are implicated in a range of cellular processes, including microRNA sponging, protein binding, and alternative splicing regulation. Their dysregulation has been linked to various diseases, highlighting their potential as diagnostic and therapeutic targets.

Harnessing RNA biology for therapeutic intervention

The profound insights gained from RNA biology have paved the way for innovative therapeutic strategies aimed at modulating gene expression and cellular function. RNA-based therapeutics, including antisense oligonucleotides, small interfering RNAs, and RNA-based vaccines, hold promise for treating a wide range of diseases, including genetic disorders, infectious diseases, and cancer.

Antisense oligonucleotides, for example, are designed to target specific RNA molecules and modulate their function through mechanisms such as RNA degradation, splicing modulation, or translation inhibition. These molecules offer a targeted approach for correcting aberrant gene expression patterns associated with genetic

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disorders and other diseases.

Similarly, small interfering RNAs (siRNAs) can be used to silence speci c genes by inducing mRNA degradation or translational repression, o ering a potent tool for gene knockdown and functional genomics studies. RNA-based vaccines, such as messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines, harness the body’s own cellular machinery to produce antigenic proteins and trigger immune responses, o ering a

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