

## CURRICULUM VITAE

**Name** Professor Muhammad Akhtar, FRS

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**Occupation** Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry at the University of Southampton  
&  
Distinguish National Professor Director General, School of Biological  
Sciences, University of the Punjab, New Campus, Lahore – Pakistan.

**Birth date** 23 February 1933; Batala, Punjab, India

**Nationality** British/Pakistani  
Married to Monika E Schürmann; two sons: Marcus Imran  
and Daniel Azeem

**Education** 1952 Bsc Government College, University of Punjab at Lahore, Pakistan  
1954 Msc (Gold Medallist) University of Punjab, Pakistan  
1959 PhD DIC Imperial College, University of London, UK.

**Honours** 1980 Fellow of the Royal Society, UK  
1981 Sitara-I-Imtiaz, Government of Pakistan  
1983-85 Member of the Council of the Royal Society  
1984 Founding Fellow of the Third World Academy of Sciences  
1992-1997 Treasurer & Member of Council of Third World Academy of  
Sciences  
1993 Royal Society of Chemistry Flintoff Medal  
1996 Third World Academy of Sciences Medal Lecturer  
1997-2003 Vice President Third World Academy of Sciences  
2000 Honorary DSc Degree of Karachi University  
2000 Foreign Fellow of Pakistan Academy of Sciences

### Career Positions:

1959-1963 Research Scientist, Research Institute, Cambridge, MA, USA  
1963- Department of Biochemistry, University of Southampton, UK:  
1963-1966 Lecturer  
1966-1968 Senior Lecturer  
1968-1973 Reader  
1973- 1998 Professor of Biochemistry  
1978-1993 Head of Department of Biochemistry  
1983-1987 Chairman, School of Biochemical & Physiological Sciences  
1989-1990 Chairman, Institute of Biomolecular Sciences  
1990-1994 Director, SERC Molecular Recognition Centre  
1998- Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry  
2002-todate Director General, School of Biological Sciences, University of  
the Punjab.  
2004-todate Distinguished National Professor, Higher Education  
Commission, Islamabad.

## Supervision of Research Students:

Supervision of 70 successful PhD students.

## BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS, PROFESSOR M AKHTAR

Professor M Akhtar was born at Batala (India) on 23 February 1933. He received his early school education in Mau (District, Azamgarh, India) and matriculated from the Muslim High School, Batala in 1948. The same year he joined Government College, Sargodha (Pakistan) and passed the Intermediate Science Examination in 1950, standing First in his college. He read Chemistry at Government College, Lahore and the University of Punjab at Lahore, obtaining a Gold Medal in his Msc. For a short period, he joined Dr Bashir Ahmed team and was one of the three Research Scholars (the other two being Dr R U Qureshi and Dr Amir Muhammad) who formed the nucleus staff of PCSIR Lahore. It is quite possible that he might have been the first person to light a Bunsen burner - at the time a prized possession of young Pakistani chemists - in a temporary laboratory at the present site. He came to the UK in 1956 and completed his PhD research under the supervision of Prof. B C L Weedon, FRS at Imperial College, London in 1959. He then worked for four years as a Research Associate under the Nobel Laureate Sir Derek Barton FRS at the Research Institute of Medicine and Chemistry, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA on the development and delineation of the mechanism of the Barton Reaction.

He was appointed to a Lectureship at the University of Southampton in 1963 and became a Professor in 1973. He was the holder of the only established Chair of Biochemistry in the Faculty of Science as well as Medicine of the University until his retirement in 1998. He is now the Emeritus Professor of Biochemistry. He was the Head of Department of Biochemistry from 1978-1993 and also the Chairman of the School of Biochemical and Physiological Sciences from 1978-1987. At the last count, 60 individuals had successfully completed their PhDs under his supervision. Even though a rather discriminating author, he has published more than 160 original research papers in refereed journals and many specialist chapters in technical books.

He was elected to the Royal Society in 1980 and has served on the Council of the Royal Society and its various Committees. He was the recipient of the *Sitara-I-Imtiaz* from the Government of Pakistan and the Flintoff Medal from the Royal Society of Chemistry. He is one of the Founding Fellows of the Third World Academy of Sciences. He is currently the Vice President of the Academy and has been its Treasurer and also the Chairman of Biochemistry & Molecular Biology Committee, and is the recipient of the 1996 Medal of the Academy.

His research has been concerned with *The elucidation of the stereochemistry and chemical mechanisms of enzymes involved in the biosynthesis of complex natural products and studies on visual proteins*. He has been at the forefront of applying the principles of stereochemistry and mechanistic organic chemistry to the elucidation of a wide variety of biological problems. The strategy initiated by him nearly a quarter of a century ago has culminated in the delineation of the basic molecular mechanisms through which biological systems may carry out complex chemical transformations. He has contributed to the understanding of the mechanisms through which the intricate architectures of cholesterol and ergosterol are elaborated by mammalian liver and yeast respectively, haem which is one of the components of the oxygen carrying protein, haemoglobin, is produced in the red blood cells and sex hormones, androgen and oestrogen are biosynthesised in gonads. Apart from their relevance to biosyntheses, cumulatively these studies defined the complete substrate stereochemistry of at least a dozen enzymes and also shed new light on their catalytic mechanisms. In many instances the mechanistic principles signalled by these investigations were found to typify a general phenomenon. The enzymes falling in this category are those involved in the following reactions:

1. The reduction of olefinic linkages, e.g.  $\Delta^{5,6}$ ,  $\Delta^{14,15}$  and  $\Delta^{24,25}$ -reductases;
2. S-adenosylmethionine dependent C-methylation in ergosterol biosynthesis;
3. oxidative desaturases, e.g.  $\Delta^{5,6}$ -desaturase and protoporphyrinogen IX oxidase;
4. pyridoxal phosphate dependent C-C bond formation, e.g. serine hydroxymethyltransferase and 5-aminolaevulinic acid synthase;
5. cofactor independent non-oxidative and oxidative decarboxylations, e.g. uroporphyrinogen decarboxylase and coproporphyrinogen oxidase.

More importantly, the work on oestrogen biosynthesis was seminal in highlighting that certain P-450 group of enzymes catalyse a diverse range of generic reactions at a single active site.

This discovery prompted a critical analysis of the chemical features of iron-containing-oxygen-binding proteins and led to the proposal of a unified hypothesis which views a wide variety of biological oxidation processes as variations on a common mechanistic theme. The insight provided by such studies is helping in designing a novel class of antioestrogens which have potential use in the treatment of one particular type of breast cancer. Another area of research being pursued in his laboratory uses the modern techniques of recombinant DNA technology and is directed to unearth the mechanisms underlying the production of antibiotics by microorganism and also the origin of antibiotic resistance in clinical isolates.

His longstanding interest in the vision field which is distinguished by his pioneering studies at the elucidation of the mode and site of binding of the retinal chromophore in bovine rhodopsin has found general application to other classes of retinal-based proteins. Now the primary sequences of a large number of visual proteins including four from human eye have been elucidated by other workers using either protein or DNA sequencing. In all these cases the site of retinal-binding was inferred from Professor Akhtar's original experimental work on bovine rhodopsin. His group was also the first to describe the structure of bovine rhodopsin in terms of seven trans-membrane segments. This latter feature which was subsequently confirmed in other laboratories using more advanced approaches seems to have been conserved in the structures of all animal rhodopsins described to date. In the recent years his research in the field is moving towards the exciting goal of understanding the molecular mechanisms through which rhodopsin after being activated by light interacts with other proteins of the retina setting the stage first for the transmission of message to brain and then termination of the signal in preparation for the next event. The latter scenario is accomplished by two enzymes, rhodopsin kinase, which was discovered by others and phosphoropsin phosphates described by Akhtar. Furthermore, his group has shed new light on the mechanism action of rhodopsin kinase.

**Professor M. Akhtar**  
**PUBLICATIONS**

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M. Akhtar and B.C.L. Weedon.  
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2. Studies with acetylenes. Part III: The synthesis of three partly-*cis*-diphenyl-octatetraenes.  
M. Akhtar, T.A. Richards and B.C.L. Weedon.  
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3. Carotenoids and related compounds. Part VIII: Novel synthesis of echinenone and canthaxanthin.  
M. Akhtar and B.C.L. Weedon.  
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4. The photochemical rearrangement of hypochlorites.  
M. Akhtar and D.H.R. Barton  
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5. A convenient synthesis of 19-norsteroids.  
M. Akhtar and D.H.R. Barton  
J. Am. Chem. Soc. **84**, 1496 (1962)
6. The synthesis of substituted aldosterone.  
M. Akhtar, D.H.R. Barton, J.M. Beaton and A.G. Hortmann  
J. Am. Chem. Soc. **85**, 1512-1519 (1963)
7. The mechanism of the Barton Reaction.  
M. Akhtar and M.M. Pechet  
J. Am. Chem. Soc. **86**, 265-268 (1964)
8. Reactions at position 19 in the steroid nucleus: A convenient synthesis of 19-norsteroids.  
M. Akhtar and D.H.R. Barton  
J. Am. Chem. Soc. **86**, 1528-1536 (1964)
9. Some recent developments in the photochemistry of organic nitrites and hypohalites.  
M. Akhtar  
Advances in Photochemistry **2**, 263-303 (1964)
10. A convenient synthesis of vitamin D<sub>3</sub>-9, 19-<sup>3</sup>H and the mechanism of the previtamin D<sub>3</sub> vitamin D<sub>3</sub> reaction.  
M. Akhtar and C.J. Gibbons.  
Tetrahedron Letters 509-512 (1965)
11. Silver-catalyzed decomposition of hypobromites.  
M. Akhtar, P. Hunt and P.B. Dewhurst.  
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12. Synthesis of rings A and B of strophanthidin.  
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13. Some radical exchange reactions during nitrite ester photolysis.  
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15. The reduction of a rhodopsin derivative.  
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16. The synthesis of labelled 24-methylenelanosterol and its conversion into ergosterol.  
M. Akhtar, M.A. Parvez and P.F. Hunt.  
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18. Synthesis of a medium-size ring via alkoxy radical decomposition.  
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23. The conversion of cholest-7-en-3 $\beta$ -ol into cholesterol: General comments on the mechanism of the introduction of double bonds in enzymic reactions.  
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M. Akhtar, M.A. Parvez and P.F. Hunt.  
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45. The mechanism of action of serine transhydroxymethylase.  
P.M. Jordan and M. Akhtar.  
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M.D. Hirtenstein and M. Akhtar.  
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47. The stereochemistry of hydrogen elimination from C-7 in cholesterol and ergosterol biosynthesis.  
M. Akhtar, A.D. Rahimtula and D.C. Wilton.  
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M. Akhtar and D.C. Wilton.  
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51. The pathway for the removal of C-32 in cholesterol biosynthesis.  
K.T.W. Alexander, M. Akhtar, R.B. Boar, J.F. McGhie and D.H.R. Barton.  
J.C.S. Chem. Comm. 1479-1481 (1971)
52. The substrate activation in some pyridine nucleotide linked enzymic reactions: The conversion of desmosterol into cholesterol.  
I.A. Watkinson, D.C. Wilton, A.D. Rahimtula and M. Akhtar.  
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53. Chemical composition of an oestrogen-induced calcium-binding glycolipophosphoprotein in *Xenopus laevis*.  
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Biochem. J. **122**, 107-113 (1971)
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