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INTRODUCTION

A compound similar to cholesterol is found in every living organism. The name cholesterol (from Greek *cheir*, hand + *stola*, fat) was first used by the German chemist Leopold Gmelin in 1788. In 1903, the German chemist Adolf Windaus was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for his work on the structure of cholesterol. At that time, thousands of steroids, the compounds with four rings in their structures, were known.

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