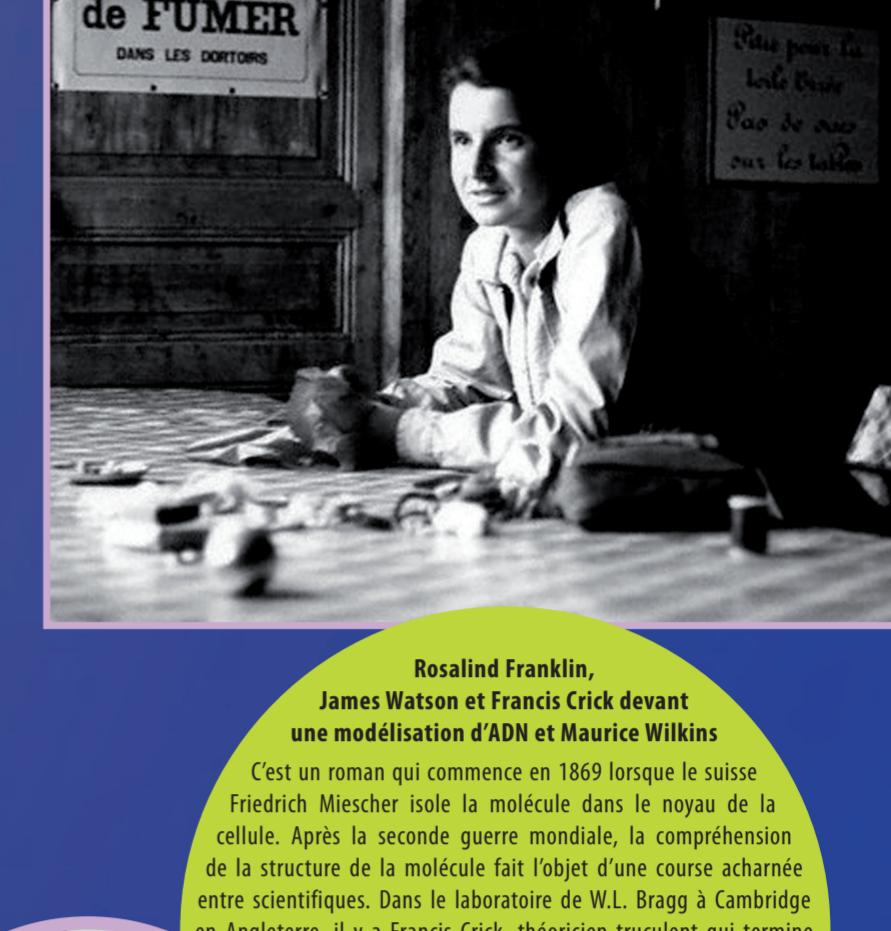




# Les rayons X et l'ADN

L'ADN est présent dans toutes les cellules vivantes. C'est le support de l'hérédité, qui recèle le « secret de la vie ». Elle est constituée de deux brins complémentaires formés par deux séquences régulières de petites molécules, enroulés en double hélice. Ainsi, elle peut se dupliquer en molécules identiques entre elles, propriété à la base de la génétique. C'est ce cliché d'un pseudo-cristal fait de fibres d'ADN, de Rosalind Franklin, obtenu en 1951 par diffraction des rayons X, qui a permis de déterminer la forme de la molécule.



Rosalind Franklin,  
James Watson et Francis Crick devant  
un modélisation d'ADN et Maurice Wilkins

C'est un roman qui commence en 1869 lorsque le suisse

Friedrich Miescher isole la molécule dans le noyau de la

cellule. Après la seconde guerre mondiale, la compréhension

de la structure de la molécule fait l'objet d'une course acharnée

entre scientifiques. Dans le laboratoire de W.L. Bragg à Cambridge

en Angleterre, il y a Francis Crick, théoricien troublé qui termine

sa thèse de doctorat et James Watson, jeune ornithologue reconvertis

récemment aux rayons X ; au King's College de Londres se trouvent

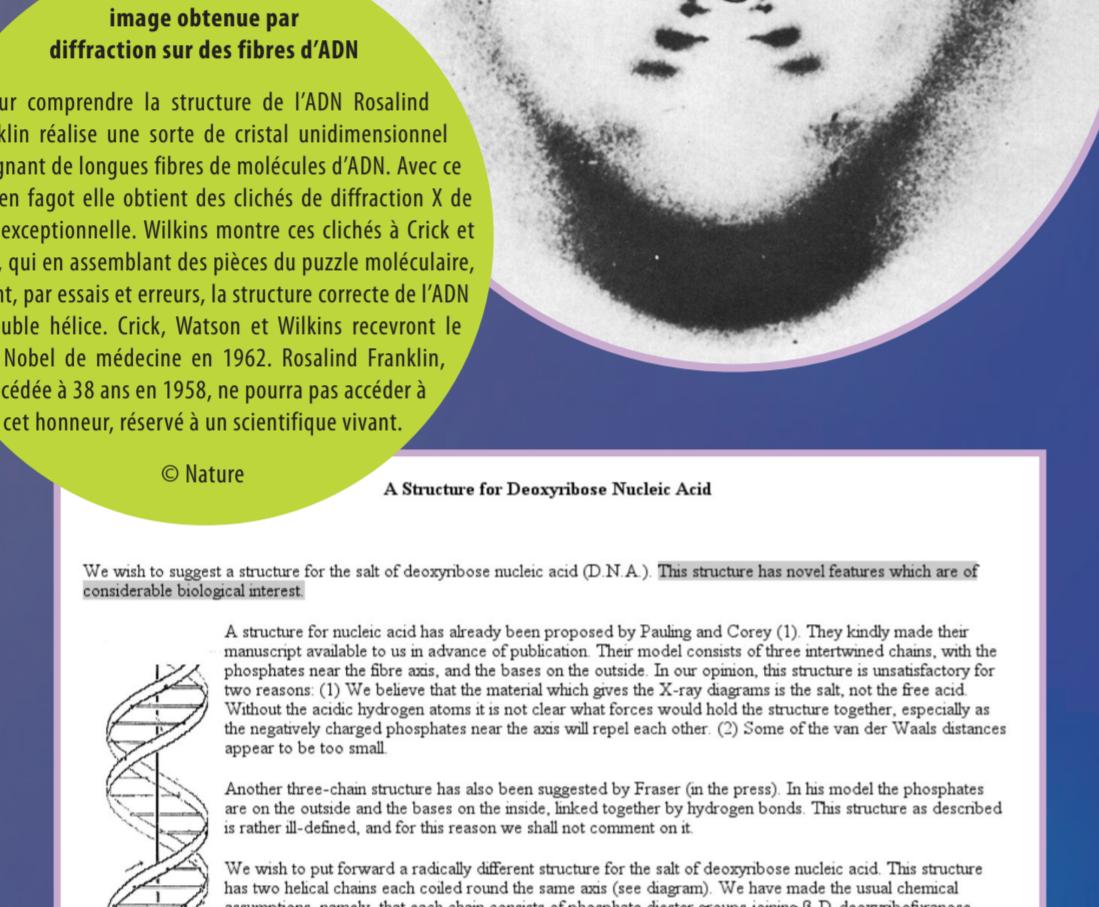
les expérimentateurs : Rosalind Franklin et Maurice Wilkins, un

peu en froid, tandis qu'aux Etats-Unis le grand chimiste Linus

Pauling suggère une structure à trois brins pour l'ADN.

Pauling donne la bonne idée mais se trompe dans son

application. Il faudrait faire un cristal...  
source: SciencePhotoLibrary



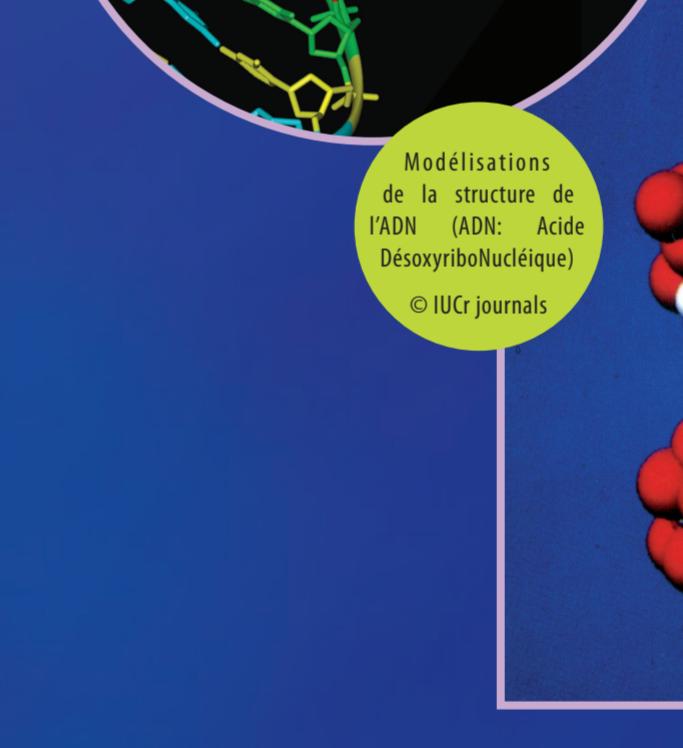
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A Structure for Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid

We wish to suggest a structure for the salt of deoxyribonucleic acid (D.N.A.). This structure has novel features which are of considerable biological interest.

A structure for nucleic acid has already been proposed by Pauling and Corey (1). They kindly made their manuscript available to us in advance of publication. Their model consists of three intertwined chains, with the phosphate group located on the outside and the bases on the inside. In our opinion this model is unsatisfactory for two reasons: (1) We believe that the molecule must be much more compact than the salt, since the free acid and without the acidic hydroxyl atoms it is not clear what forces would hold the structure together, especially as regards to the phosphates near the axis will repel each other. (2) Some of the van der Waals distances appear to be too great.

Another three-chain structure has also been suggested by Fraser (in the press). In his model the phosphates are on the outside and the bases on the inside, linked together by hydrogen bonds. This structure as described is rather ill-defined, and for this reason we shall not comment on it.

We wish to put forward a radically different structure for the salt of deoxyribonucleic acid. This structure has two helical chains each coiled round the same axis (see diagram). We have made the usual chemical assumptions, namely, that each chain consists of phosphate ester groups joining  $\beta$ -D-deoxyribofuranose rings, and that the phosphate groups are all on one side of the axis and the bases on the other, as shown in the figure. Both chains follow right-handed helices, but owing to the twist in the dyad the sequences of the atoms in the two chains run in opposite directions. Each chain loosely resembles Furberg's model No. 1, that is, the bases are roughly perpendicular to the axis of the chain. The two chains are linked together by hydrogen bonds between the bases. There is a residue on each every 3.4 Å in the z-direction. We have assumed an angle of 30° between the planes of the rings in adjacent residues. The total length of each chain is about 34 Å. The distance of a phosphorus atom from the fibre axis is 10 Å. As the phosphates are on the outside, cations have easy access to them.



Modélisations de la structure de l'ADN (ADN: Acide Désoxyribonucléique)

