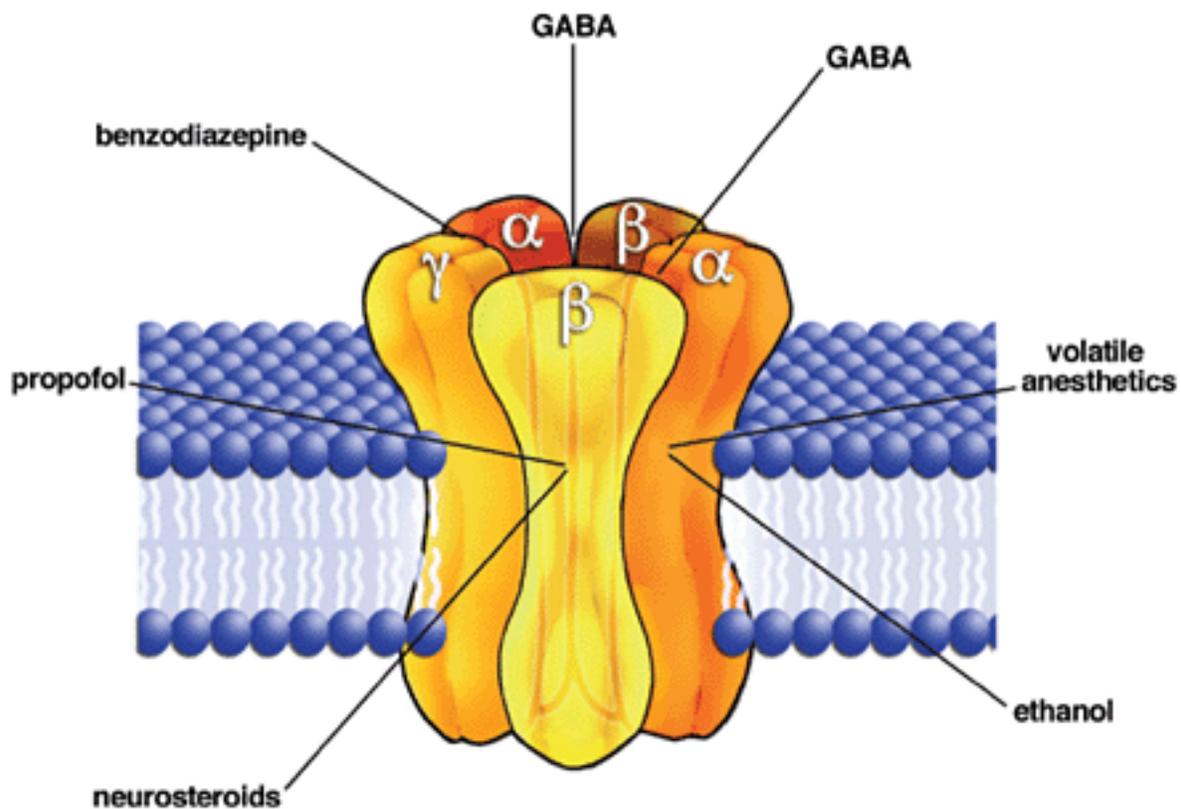


Schematic drawing of the γ -aminobutyric acid receptor (GABA_A) ligandgated ion channel complex. The receptor molecule is formed by the confluence of five subunit proteins



In this case, two of the subunits are of the α type, two β , and one γ , although many combinations of the 20 known subunits are possible. Globular regions of the protein stick out from the membrane on the extracellular side, and the interfaces between these regions are targets for GABA and for the benzodiazepines and related drugs. The protein domains that span the outer cell membrane are depicted as cylinders. These regions are thought to be targets for general anesthetics (e.g., propofol) neurosteroids, and alcohol. A hole in the middle of the five subunits is the ion conduction pathway, or channel pore.