Introduction

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The developmental, cellular and molecular biology of myelin-forming cells, oligodendrocytes and Schwann cells, and the formation and maintenance of myelin membrane is an active, growing area of research. At the level of basic molecular and cellular biology, these cells have proven to be unique models of some of the most basic questions in these fields. In parallel, there is an increased interest in applying the findings of the basic scientist to demyelinating and neurodegenerative diseases such as multiple sclerosis, PKU, leukodystrophies and peripheral neuropathies.

The purpose of the conference was to critically examine forefront issues of the biology of myelinating cells and their application to disease processes. The participants were active researchers in the field and interested clinicians. The keynote address was given by Dr. Moses Rodriguez from the Mayo Clinic, on the topic of the 'Promotion of CNS Remyelination'. An insightful summary of the meeting was presented by Dr. Kuni Susuki from the University of North Carolina. The total attendance was 120 participants. The format was designed to encourage participation by all attendees through a mix of platform presentations, extensive discussion and poster presentations. Students, postdoctoral fellows and junior faculty were given special opportunity to present ideas and data.

The papers in this special topic section were developed from presentations at this meeting. Forty-four of the 48 abstracts submitted to the meeting are also part of this section. A good and productive time was had by all. We thank Dr. Tony Campagnoni, Chief Editor of this journal, and S. Karger AG, Basel, for publishing this special section.

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