Preface

Over the years, our concept of the role of eosinophils in health and disease has drastically changed. After its discovery by Paul Ehrlich in the late 19th century, the eosinophil was long regarded as an anti-inflammatory cell regulating anaphylaxis and mast cell mediators. But in the 1970s and 1980s, a number of leaders in eosinophil research, such as Gerald J. Gleich, clearly demonstrated and established its proinflammatory role and heralded the first golden era of research into this cell. The current anti-inflammatory strategy to treat asthma, which has significantly reduced morbidity and mortality associated with the disease, is largely based on evidence derived from eosinophil research. However, in 2000, the failure of a clinical trial for asthma using a humanized monoclonal antibody to IL-5 deeply questioned the 'major' role of the eosinophil in asthma. Nevertheless, heated debate on the role of the cell since then has promoted a large number of new discoveries in the field. The anti-IL-5 strategy consequently revealed the role of the eosinophil in airway remodeling in asthma. Eosinophil-derived neurotoxin, one of the eosinophil granule proteins, has been shown to attract and stimulate dendritic cells to promote Th2

responses. The cells were also found to produce a plethora of molecules that can extensively influence our immune system. Now, in the 21st century, we have entered the second golden era of eosinophil research.

The 19th annual workshop on Eosinophils in Allergy and Related Diseases 2007 was held in Tokyo, June 30, 2007, with 25 research presentations from the fields of basic and clinical sciences covering eosinophil biology and its clinical correlates. Leading researchers in this field in Japan presented and discussed their cutting edge data. These proceedings include 15 original papers and 1 review paper. Four abstracts, some of which have been published elsewhere, are also included. The titles of the remaining 5 workshop presentations are listed at the end of this issue. We hope that these studies contribute to a better understanding of the pathophysiology and treatment of allergy and eosinophil-related diseases.

Finally, we would like to express our sincere appreciation to Novartis Pharma K.K. (Tokyo) for supporting this workshop and to the International Medical Publishers (Tokyo) for their excellent assistance in publishing these proceedings.

Takao Fujisawa, Mie, Japan