Preface

The first International Congress on Stem Cells and Tissue Formation in Dresden in September 2006 showcased research carried out within the stem cells research program of the German Research Foundation (see introductory article by Anna Wobus). In this special issue of *Cells Tissues Organs*, as in the original conference, a selection of these projects is complemented by invited keynote contributions from an international arena and by papers prepared by the winners of the conference's young investigators awards.

One of our main considerations in assembling this issue was to try to maintain as much as possible of the variety, timeliness, spontaneity and excitement that made the conference such a success. We therefore decided to adopt a relatively liberal approach to the format, leaving the authors free to present their results and ideas in the form they considered most appropriate. What has resulted is a series of personal snapshots of contemporary stem cell research, taken from a variety of different angles and ranging from the close-up to the wide angle. To facilitate browsing through this collage, we have arranged the contributions into the broad categories of embryonic and adult stem cells, further subdivided into articles dealing

with stem cell biology, niche interactions, therapeutic applications and tumor biology. Please bear in mind as you go through the contents, however, that no division can do true justice to an interdisciplinary field, so that the points of overlap may hold unexpected surprises.

It was clear from the beginning that the assembly and coordination of over 20 independent contributions into the same issue was going to take longer than the average manuscript processing time. For this reason, we have actively encouraged revision during the review process, to ensure that the published versions are timely and informative. This has involved a certain amount of brow beating and repeated consultation of both authors and referees, and a seemingly endless flow of e-mails via Linda Haas at *Cells Tissues Organs*, who has coordinated the submission and review process. We are very grateful that our persistence has been taken in good spirit by all sides, so that the special issue has become a real team effort, just like the program upon which it is based and the conference from which it is drawn. We hope you find what you are looking for.

Ursula Just, Kiel
Michael Cross, Leipzig

Editorial Note

Ursula Just and Michael Cross deserve to be congratulated for having done a remarkable job with guest-editing this issue, which continues a series of Special Topic Issues on stem cell research. *Cells Tissues Organs* will maintain a special focus on this expanding field of research.

H.-W. Denker, Essen

Previous Special Topic Issues on Stem Cell Research:

- Cells Tissues Organs Vol. 165, No. 3–4, 1999: Embryonic Stem Cells as a Developmental Model in vitro. Guest Editors: A.M. Wobus, Gatersleben; K.R. Boheler, Baltimore, Md.
- Cells Tissues Organs Vol. 171, No. 1, 2002: Somatic Stem Cells and Their Plasticity. Guest Editors: A.M. Müller, Würzburg; K.M. McNagny, Vancouver, B.C.
- Cells Tissues Organs Vol. 187, No. 4, 2008: Series of articles on 'Stem Cell Research: New Bioethical Challenges'.