Preface

It is our great pleasure to publish this special issue on '*Progress in Analysing Disorders of Sexual Development*' which summarizes the current status in clinical and molecular research in this important and exciting field. A new terminology for human disorders of sexual development (DSD) has recently been proposed at an International Consensus Meeting, and this terminology and the current knowledge useful for the management of DSD patients is summarized in the introductory chapter by Houk and Lee. The following chapters inform on the roles of a number of genes, some of which such as *RSPO1* have only recently been identified in testis and ovarian development and spermatogenesis. Furthermore, multiple genes involved in pituitary-gonadal functions have been identified, and the deleterious effects of environmental chemicals or of drugs interfering with endocrine function are also being elucidated. Such advances will allow better identification of the genetic factors causing susceptibility to environmental effects causing endocrine malfunction and will provide more appropriate methods for risk assessment, thereby contributing to normal human sexual development and to reproductive health.

Thus, while there is a long way to go to reveal the complete picture of human sexual development, many pieces of the jigsaw puzzle of this process are now in our hands. These advances will serve to clarify the molecular network involved in sexual development, and will contribute to better care of patients with DSD disorders. We hope that this thematic issue will be useful in providing an up-to-date overview on the current progress in this field.

Tsutomu Ogata
Tokyo, September 2008