Preface

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Epidemiological studies have shown that the incidence of pancreatic diseases is increasing worldwide.

Clinical management of patients with acute pancreatitis has been changing during the last decade. This is particularly due to our better understanding of the natural course of the disease including early distinction between edematous and necrotizing pancreatitis by means of necrosis indicators and contrast-enhanced CT scanning. In severe acute pancreatitis bacterial infection plays a most crucial role and the indication for surgery is now concentrated on the proof of infection.

In chronic pancreatitis our diagnostic approach (endoscopy, CT as well as MRI) has improved considerably. The role of pancreatic as well as common bile duct stenting as a definitive treatment is still under debate, whereas organ-preserving surgery, carried out as soon as complications of the disease have evolved, has been demonstrated to play a major role in the management of patients with chronic pancreatitis.

In pancreatic cancer multimodal treatment strategies in combination with extensive surgical intervention have led to an increase of the 5-year survival rate to 30%. These data are primarily generated in Japan and further trials in Europe and America will show whether the prognosis in cancer of the pancreas is really improving.

This issue of Digestive Surgery contains the contributions of leading pan-creatologists from around the world who attended an international meeting entitled 'Pancreatic Diseases: New Horizons' which was held in Bern, Switzerland, in September 1994. Due to the enthusiasm, fine discipline and personal input of all the participants, and thanks to the rapid and professional publication process of Karger Publishers, this really up-to-date publication covering all aspects of pancreatic disease is now available. It should stimulate clinical and basic scientists around the world to undertake further investigations to help improve our understanding of pancreatic diseases and their management.