Introduction

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This issue of *Hormone Research* is devoted to the proceedings of the XIIIth Annual Lilly International Symposium on Endocrinology and Development, held October 27-29, 1994, in Rome.

As in past years, the symposium was opened with an introductory lecture. This year's lecture focused on molecular archaeology. Molecular biology has made it possible to study human and animal DNA. The implications of this science are of relevance for evolutionary biology and for the study of animal species which are at risk of becoming extinct, making their preservation more feasible.

The symposium was divided into three topics:

Final height in children after growth hormone (GH) therapy.

Imaging of endocrine tumours.

The neuroendocrinology of stress in relation to immune disease and eating disorders.

In the past, GH therapy has been improved for GH-deficient subjects and has also been increasingly used in children with short stature without GH deficiency for example GH therapy has been approved for use in Turner syndrome. However, the success of GH therapy may only be reliably assessed on the basis of the final height attained. After nearly 40 years of GH therapy, it is now appropriate to review its effectiveness and state its real value in benefiting individual patients, both GH deficient and non-GH deficient.

This session on imaging of endocrine tumours gave state-of-the-art reviews on computed tomography (CT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and on the new, fast developing technique of peptide receptor scintigraphy.

Endocrine tumours have very different clinical presentations, and are often not easy to localize. However, recent advancements in diagnostic procedures have made tremendous progress, and clinicians now rely on a battery of sophisticated methodologies. CT and MRI are established and used routinely, but functional-dynamic techniques will further improve their diagnostic potential. Additional metabolic information is provided by radio-nuclide scanning techniques. Peptide receptor scintigraphy may be used to screen the entire body for location of tumours (and metastases) and for radiotherapy with a radionuclide-labelled receptor analogue.

The workshop on neuroendocrinology, a term which has presently extended to psychoimmunoendocrinology, showed that the gap between basic and clinical research is slowly being closed. The discovery of biologically active peptides revealed the existence of functional systems in the body which were totally unknown to classical medicine and physiology. This new science initially produced some confusion, as emerging concepts were difficult to relate to clinical practice. However, functional models for the diagnosis and characterization of stress-

related diseases are now being proposed which should create the basis for the development of new therapies, which still remains the major challenge in this area.

Given the topics covered by the meeting, the proceedings can only provide summarizing information, but we trust that this information can be a useful reference for the interested reader.

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