Preface

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There are no doubts that from the first studies of Raben on the use of human GH in GH deficiency, much progress has been made; however, what is impressive is the rate at which this progress has proceeded in the last few years. The most important factor in priming the research in the field of short stature has surely been the advent of recombinant human GH (rhGH), in other words the possibility for the investigator to have unlimited amounts of hGH to treat either short-statured children not necessarily affected by GH deficiency or even patients without short stature but affected by diseases that may benefit from the anabolic action of GH. Obviously, owing to these changes in the therapeutical use of the hormone, some problems and questions arised. One aspect regards the safety and the metabolic consequences of rhGH therapy, considering that at present the practice of giving supraphysiological doses of rhGH is more and more frequent, particularly in non-GH-deficient children. As the hormone is administered in non-GH-deficient children, a crucial point is to assess the real benefit of so expensive a therapy that compels the child to daily injections. Indeed, a practical problem concerns the compliance of the hormone administration and on this matter new devices have been set up and tried. Thus, the underlying concept of this special issue of Hormone Research is to give the community of pediatric endocrinologists a current review on advanced research aspects and issues of relevance in the clinical management of children with disturbances of growth and development.

We are confident that these contributions will be stimulating for the pediatric endocrinologist, who is involved in the clinical management of short children daily.