Preface

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Compared to carcinomas and other malignant diseases, carcinoid tumors are rare events. Most of these endocrine tumors are characterized by a fascinating clinical spectrum and an unpredictable course of disease. Although the principles of treatment have not been changed within the last decades, at least symptomatic treatment has been significantly improved by the availability of strong acid-suppressing drugs in patients with Zollinger-Ellison syndrome and long-acting somatostatin analogues in patients with functional tumors. In contrast, no standardized regimens are available for an individual patient with metastatic disease. More importantly, at least from the standpoint of the clinician, the term 'carcinoid' is iridescent. Should it be reserved for tumors originating from the fore-, mid- and hindgut and not for endocrine pancreatic tumors revealing an identical morphological appearance? These questions have been addressed during a symposium held in January 1994 in Munich, which was focused on the morphological, clinical and therapeutic aspects of 'carcinoids'. A distinct faculty of internationally renowned pathologists, basic and clinical scientists set out to define the term 'carcinoid' and to explore rational diagnostic and therapeutic approaches in the individual tumor patient. The most exciting result of the meeting was a consensus on the terminology of endocrine tumors of the gut formulated by pathology experts and published within these proceedings.

The meeting entitled 'Carcinoid tumours: Symposium on pathology, epidemiology, clinical aspects and therapy' restricted the speakers to 20-min presentations allowing an extensive discussion period after each section. It was not possible to include the discussions into the publication of the proceedings. However, the manuscripts provided by each speaker reflect the course of the discussion and provide a state-of-the-art contribution including an invaluable reference source for all those interested in this fascinating topic. The symposium was supported by Sandoz, Nürnberg, Germany, which we owe much gratitude for making it possible.

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