Preface

M.M.

Magallón

Martinez

Madrid

This issue gathers the conference papers presented during the 4th International Meeting on Hemophilia, held in the La Paz Hospital Hemophilia Centre, Madrid, Spain, to celebrate Dr. Jose Martin Villar's retirement. Martin Villar has been the Chief of Hematology and Hemotherapy Service and the Hemophilia Centre Director in the La Paz Hospital for 26 years. The choice of the Meeting's title 'Inside Hemophilia: Milestones in Hemophilia and von Willebrand's Disease in the Last 25 Years' was due to two reasons:

(1) The interest in reconsidering the enormous changes occurring in the field of congenital coagulopathies during this period of time. In the mid-60s we were witnesses to the first rational, efficient, and easily used anti-hemophilic treatment thanks to the cryoprecipitates. The patient's life expectancy was totally changed with it; not only could we deal with the dread of CNS hemorrhage with success (the first cause of death in young hemophiliacs at this time), but moreover they could begin to forget the long periods of staying in bed, the orthosis, the casts, the splints ...; unfortunately the latter had been the only possibilities for minimizing the impact of hemorrhages on joints and muscles for a very long time. We have seen how the treatment became more generalized with every passing day, because of the increasing production and purity of concentrates. The patient was able to dispose of the concentrates at home and learned to apply them by himself or by his relatives. The prophylactic treatment became the chosen one in some countries for young people because it was the best procedure in delaying, or avoiding, the hemophilic arthropathy. The appearance of hemophilia centers, with a comprehensive medical and psychosocial approach to the patient and his family, marked another important achievement for the hemophiliacs. They were able to overcome the uncertainty of their illness and the loneliness and to occupy the places, at school, at work, in society to which they had every right. Most sports, formerly forbidden to them, today have become very recommendable. Unfortunately, the substitutive therapy had its complications such as the inhibitor's production, specifically against factor VIII and factor IX. This was later devaluated because of its small incidence and the possibility to use some different therapeutic approaches capable of minimizing these antibodies' action against normal blood coagulation. The infectious complications, especially hepatitis and the human immunodeficiency virus infection, have been more danger-

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ous. How many patients have been separated from us because of AIDS? Most of them, after a long time of coping with hemophilia together, became true friends. The price paid by the hemophiliacs has been very high. But fortunately, nowadays, the achievements obtained have been maintained, not only by patients, but also by health care providers and researchers. New physiopathologic knowledge, more and more reliable diagnostic methods, alternative therapies

(not for all patients), and ultrapurified concentrates, some not derived from human plasma, have been developed, and, in the near future, we can guess at the possibility for a definite cure of hemophilia through the genetic cellular load change.

(2) We thought that a scientific meeting would be the most suitable farewell for Dr. Martin Villar's retirement. He was the founder of the La Paz Hospital Centre and the pioneer and authentic leader in hemophiliac care in Spain during the last 25 years. A warm and intense reminder of the impact of these important years on hemophilia and other congenital coagulopathies would be the ground for an intimate homage.

Most of the participating authors in this meeting do not need any introduction, because they and their professional work are very well known. I appreciate their collaboration with us, thanks to their friendship with the La Paz Hemophilia Centre and particularly with Martin Villar. The conference topics they have chosen were related to the fields in which they had developed a lot of their work. They summarize and update many of the situations we have undergone during the last aforementioned 25 years. They and Dr. Martin Villar are the real artificers in the meeting and the publication's success. Therefore, I would like to emphasize my most sincere acknowledgement to everyone for their help.