Foreword

When embarking on such a daunting task – as the description of the contemporary state of affairs regarding gastroesophageal reflux undoubtedly is – the best possible advice still remains humble. The magnitude of the problem is, indeed, overwhelming. There is more than one entity in clinical medicine whose obvious straightforwardness at first sight proves increasingly complex and at times inevitably leads to undue frustration on the part of the exploring community as a whole. Fortunately for us humans, there has always been an, albeit seemingly insignificant, relation between science and art. Who would dare to doubt that science is completely void of that genius and intuition that inherently inhabit the sphere of arts? And if Praxiteles in the 5th century B.C. by the virtue of creating the nude Venus of Knidos completely changed the appreciation of arts in the western world, so has many a great man in medicine arrived at a very significant conclusion, hereby changing the whole edifice of the then known reasoning at one stroke. But as in the case of Praxiteles, these men in medicine were preceded by countless numbers of forerunners who – though much less fortunate – still contributed in some significant manner to the ultimate outcome.

This arguably strange prologue helps to stress the point the contributing authors to this issue of *Digestive Diseases* would like to make. There can be no doubt that the scope of the problem regarding gastroesophageal reflux and its pathogenesis forbids any – and be it the remotest – notion of superiority. But alluding to the tale

of intuition and genius in medicine it is our sincere aim to join the forerunners of the exploring community on their journey to the distant shores of the land of definitive answers to the unresolved questions which this very common disorder called gastroesophageal reflux still poses. And being compassionate to those countless – and unfortunately ever increasing in numbers – victims of the dire consequences of this disorder, it is our hope that we become a part, however small, in the ongoing endeavor for an ultimate solution which – there can be little doubt about – will make gastroesophageal reflux and its sequelae a preventable condition and ultimately a curable disease.

It is a great honor to introduce the work of the contributing authors to the interested reader. This volume contains a selection of lectures presented at the EAGE Postgraduate Course during the 11th World Congress of the International Society for Diseases of the Esophagus that took place in Budapest, Hungary, in September 2008. The EAGE Postgraduate Course was devoted to the issue of ‘Complications of GERD’ and included some highly exciting debates of key issues.

Distinguished experts provide updates on the various aspects of gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD). In addition, we have included a few interesting original contributions on GERD dealing with community-based as well as pathophysiological aspects. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the authors most sincerely for their contributions.

This volume contains chapters related to important aspects of GERD, focusing on prevention and treatment. In addition, data on emerging aspects such as epidemiology of the complications of GERD, extraesophageal manifestations of GERD, screening and surveillance of Barrett's esophagus, its chemoprevention and the new aspects of esophageal surgical therapies are presented here.

It is our sincere hope that the contents of this volume will reflect the enthusiasm that was generated at the Postgraduate Course and that its effect will be one of stimulation and facilitation of new international projects and scientific collaborations among academic institutions in Europe and the World.

Prof. Dr. Zsolt Tulassay

Prof. Dr. Peter Malfertheiner