Intravenous Lipid Emulsions
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Volume Editors

Philip C. Calder  Southampton
Dan L. Waitzberg  São Paulo
Berthold Koletzko  Munich

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List of Contributors

Federica Agostini
Center for Chronic Intestinal Failure
Department of Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology
Policlinico Sant’Orsola-Malpighi
Via Massarenti 9
IT–40138 Bologna (Italy)

Graham C. Burdge
Academic Unit of Human Health and Development
Faculty of Medicine
University of Southampton
IDS Building
MP887 Southampton General Hospital
Tremora Road
Southampton SO16 6YD (UK)

Philip C. Calder
Human Development & Health Academic Unit
Faculty of Medicine
University of Southampton
IDS Building
MP887 Southampton General Hospital
Tremora Road
Southampton SO16 6YD (UK)

Yvon A. Carpentier
Nutrition Lipid Center
Avenue de Boetendael, 53
BE–1180 Brussels (Belgium)

Jonathan Cohen
Institute for Nutrition Research and Critical Care Department
Rabin Medical Center, Beilinson Hospital
Tel Aviv University
49100 Petah Tikva (Israel)

Richard J. Deckelbaum
Institute of Human Nutrition
Columbia University Medical Center
630 W 168th St., PH 15E, Suite 1512
New York, NY 10032 (USA)

Hans Demmelmair
Div. Metabolic and Nutritional Medicine
Dr. von Hauner Children's Hospital
Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich
Lindwurmstraße 4
DE–80337 Munich (Germany)

David F. Driscoll, PhD
Stable Solutions LLC, Easton Industrial Park
19 Norfolk Avenue, Easton, MA 02375 (USA) and Faculty of Medicine, University of Massachusetts (UMASS) Medical School
Worcester, MA (USA)

Olivier J. Goulet
Hôpital Necker-Enfants Malades
University of Paris-René Descartes
149 rue de Sèvres
FR–75743 Paris Cedex 15 (France)

Mariacristina Guidetti
Center for Chronic Intestinal Failure
Department of Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology
Policlinico Sant’Orsola-Malpighi
Via Massarenti 9
IT–40138 Bologna (Italy)

Corina Hartman
Tel Aviv University (Israel)
Institute of Gastroenterology, Nutrition, and Liver Disease Schneider Children's Medical Center of Israel
14 Kaplan Street
49202 Petach Tikva (Israel)
Matthias Hecker
University of Giessen and Marburg Lung Center (UGMLC)
Medical Clinic II
Klinikstrasse 33
DE–35392 Giessen (Germany)

Axel R. Heller
Department of Anaesthesiology and Critical Care Medicine
Medical Faculty Carl Gustav Carus
University of Technology, Dresden
Fetscherstrasse 74
DE–01307 Dresden (Germany)

Stanislaw Klek
Stanley Dudrick's Memorial Hospital
General and Oncology Surgery Unit
15 Tyniecka Street
PL–32-050 Skawina (Poland)

Berthold Koletzko
Head, Div. Metabolic and Nutritional Medicine
Dr. von Hauner Children's Hospital
Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich
Lindwurmstrasse 4
DE–80337 Munich (Germany)

Konstantin Mayer
University of Giessen and Marburg Lung Center (UGMLC)
Medical Clinic II
Klinikstrasse 33
DE–35392 Giessen (Germany)

Elizabeth A. Miles
Human Development & Health Academic Unit
Faculty of Medicine
University of Southampton
IDS Building
MP887 Southampton General Hospital
Tremora Road
Southampton SO16 6YD (UK)

Loris Pironi
Center for Chronic Intestinal Failure
Department of Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology
Policlinico Sant’Orsola-Malpighi
Via Massarenti 9
IT–40138 Bologna (Italy)

Raanan Shamir
Tel Aviv University (Israel)
Institute of Gastroenterology, Nutrition, and Liver Disease
Schneider Children's Medical Center of Israel
14 Kaplan Street
49202 Petach Tikva (Israel)

Pierre Singer
Institute for Nutrition Research and Critical Care Department
Rabin Medical Center, Beilinson Hospital
Tel Aviv University
49100 Petah Tikva (Israel)

Miriam Theilla
Institute for Nutrition Research and Critical Care Department
Rabin Medical Center, Beilinson Hospital
Tel Aviv University
49100 Petah Tikva (Israel)

Raquel Susana Torrinhas
Faculty of Medicine
University São Paulo
Avenida Dr. Arnaldo, 455 – 2nd Floor, Room 2208
CEP: 01245-903 São Paulo – SP (Brazil)

Johannes B. van Goudoever
Emma Children's Hospital – AMC
c/o Room H7-282
P.O. Box 22660
NL–1100 DD Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

Hester Vlaardingerbroek
Emma Children's Hospital – AMC
Department of Pediatrics
c/o Room H7-284
P.O. Box 22660
NL–1100 DD Amsterdam (The Netherlands)

Dan L. Waitzberg
Faculty of Medicine
University São Paulo
Avenida Dr. Arnaldo, 455 – 2nd Floor, Room 2208
CEP: 01245-903 São Paulo – SP (Brazil)

Geert J.A. Wanten
Intestinal Failure Unit
Department of Gastroenterology and Hepatology
Radboud University Medical Center
P.O. Box 9101
NL–6500 HB Nijmegen (The Netherlands)
Preface

Intravenous (parenteral) nutrition can be lifesaving and is an essential intervention for those without a functional gastrointestinal tract. Lipids have been in clinical use as components of intravenous nutrition for over 50 years. They were introduced as a source of energy and essential fatty acids, undoubtedly two important roles. Initially, a number of plant seed oils were explored as sources of lipids for use in intravenous nutrition. Soybean oil was favoured over other candidate oils and, since the 1960s, emulsions of soybean oil with egg lecithin have been the most widely used. A better understanding of the metabolic and functional roles of the fatty acid components of intravenous lipid emulsions has led to a re-consideration of what lipid emulsions should bring to intravenous nutrition beyond the basic nutritional attributes of energy and essential fatty acids. There is a view that pure soybean oil may not present an optimal fatty acid composition, being very rich in one fatty acid, i.e. the essential omega-6 fatty acid linoleic acid. Hence, progressively more complex lipid formulations have been introduced that typically combine soybean oil with one or more other oils. These formulations include mixtures of soybean oil with the so-called 'medium-chain triglycerides' or MCTs, which are usually derived from coconut oil or palm kernel oil, mixtures of soybean oil with olive oil, mixtures of soybean oil, MCTs and fish oil, and mixtures of soybean oil, MCTs, olive oil and fish oil. A pure fish oil emulsion is also available, as are the so-called 'structured lipids', in which the fatty acids from soybean oil and MCTs have been randomly inter-esterified. These emulsions are all considered safe and well tolerated, although they may be cleared from the circulation at different rates. The most exciting characteristics of this range of lipid emulsions for intravenous use is that they offer the opportunity to deliver high amounts of specific fatty acids and that they are likely to possess different functional properties; in particular, they can influence inflammatory processes, immune responses and hepatic metabolism. The uptake of the different new lipid emulsions into routine clinical care has been varied according to patient type and geography, but these emulsions have been subject to considerable research. Relevant applications include children and adults who require intravenous nutrition because of short bowel syndrome, premature infants, those destined to undergo elective surgery, post-surgical patients, and the critically ill. These varied patient groups may benefit in different ways from the
new lipid emulsions, for example, some could benefit from a better balanced supply of fatty acids for maintenance of organ function and others could benefit from the ability of some fatty acids, such as the long-chain omega-3 fatty acids found in fish oil, to modulate inflammation and immune responses. The new lipid emulsions may also offer the opportunity to deliver high amounts of specific functional fatty acids in acute settings such as after severe head injury or myocardial infarction. This book brings together expert authors to provide state-of-the-art reviews of different nutritional, technological, and clinical aspects of the lipid emulsions designed for intravenous nutrition. It is our belief that the articles herein will provide the reader with a broad range of relevant and up-to-date information on the covered topics. In our view, these articles will appeal equally to basic scientists, clinical researchers and clinical practitioners and will serve to provide significant advances in the knowledge and understanding of this field. Of course, this is a moving field, with new studies being published regularly; nevertheless, these articles will remain a valuable resource to understand the background on newly emergent research in this exciting field.

*Philip C. Calder*, University of Southampton  
*Dan L. Waitzberg*, São Paulo University Medical School  
*Berthold Koletzko*, Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich Medical Centre