Preface

This special issue of *Acta Haematologica* is dedicated to Bruno Speck, a pioneer in the treatment of severe aplastic anaemia (SAA). His major contributions were the detection of a link between SAA and exposure to chloramphenicol together with Sven Moeschlin and the introduction of antilymphocyte globulin (ALG) for the treatment of SAA patients not eligible for stem cell transplantation. His aim was to improve the prognosis of SAA: scientific success was secondary. Many of his patients remember him as a caring doctor. Having shared the joy of seeing the first SAA patients recover after ALG, we also witnessed Bruno Speck's disappointment when trying to convince the professional world that ALG is effective in SAA.

The originality of Bruno Speck's experimental work was recognised early in *Acta Haematologica*, where results of preclinical ALG studies [1973;50:193–199] and the first positive clinical results [1976;55:129–139] were published. It took 10 more years before ALG/ATG became standard treatment. That ALG – in contrast to stem cell transplantation – does not cure SAA became apparent with long-term observations. This does not lessen the value of ALG/ATG: it is often lifesaving as first-line treatment, as illustrated by a case report included in this issue.

The following articles are personally dedicated to Bruno Speck by his colleagues, collaborators and one of his patients, who have followed the 'ALG story' from its beginnings to its success. Apart from giving an update on the state of the art, the contributions are a homage to Bruno, who was an original clinical researcher in haematology, an excellent teacher and a dear friend. In addition, they may trigger further research aiming at the improvement of treatment outcomes of patients with SAA, or at preventing the disease. This could be a wish of Bruno Speck, who left us too early.

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