Preface

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Surfactant therapy has been used extensively in the last two decades of the 20th century, and is now an indispensable routine in the clinical management of newborn babies with respiratory syndrome (RDS). The Collaborative European Multicenter Study Group has been involved in many important steps during the development of this treatment and is now an established, yet informal, international 'family' of basic scientists and clinical workers. Annual International Workshops on Surfactant Replacement constitute a vital part of the collaborative efforts of the group, and have been organized in various countries since 1986. Proceedings of the workshops have been published as supplements to *Biology of the Neonate* in 1992 and yearly since 1995. The present supplement is based on the proceedings of the 14th of these workshops held in Skagen, Denmark, June 23–25, 1999.

Professor Nils W. Svenningsen, who died in January 1998, was an outstanding clinical neonatologist and scientist, and a very active member of the Multicenter Study Group. He was also an extremely kind and amiable person, highly appreciated by numerous colleagues and friends. The second Nils Svenningsen Memorial Lecture is included in the program of the

Skagen meeting. The lecture, entitled 'Cytokines, pulmonary surfactant, and consequences of intrauterine infection', given by one of the true pioneers in the field, Professor Mikko Hallman, Oulo, Finland, is published here.

Many new promising experimental and clinical observations related to surfactant, and alternative methods and indications for surfactant therapy, are also reported. The contributions deal with strategies for treatment of meconium aspiration syndrome and neonatal pneumonia, methods to study structural and functional properties of hydrophobic surfactant proteins with particular reference to synthetic analogs of SP-C, update on the collectins SP-A and SP-D, early treatment of RDS with nasal continuous positive airway pressure and surfactant, and clinical trials of postnatal steroids. Papers on surfactant inactivation, early diagnosis of RDS, and other important topics presented at the Workshop provide further evidence that the field of surfactant research remains rapidly expanding, attractive, and competitive. It is clear that more research, both basic and clinical, is needed to continue to develop the knowledge base in this exciting area of neonatal respiratory disorders and surfactant.