Editors' Introductory Note

Welcome to the first issue of *Heart Drug* in its second year of appearance.

This issue features an in-depth elaboration on the investigational technique of intracoronary ultrasound (IVUS), which we perceive is an important adjunctive tool for assessing coronary atherosclerosis in present and future cardiovascular trials. We have asked two renowned groups (see articles under the 'Standardization of Core Laboratories' section on page 16 and on page 24) to present their assessment of the technique based on their own extensive experience and on the available literature, and to provide state-of-the-art standardization criteria for the uniform utilization of this investigational modality.

To accompany these articles, we requested the opinions of two prominent groups of expert interventionalists, one in the US and one in Europe, to be able to share and delineate the American viewpoint (see editorial on page 1) and the corresponding European stance (see editorial on page 4) regarding the merit and applicability of IVUS today.

Other important aspects dealt with in this issue are the potential use of natriuretic peptides in heart failure (see the review on page 39 and the accompanying editorial on page 6) and electrocardiographic aspects of using the angiotensin-II antagonist losartan in hypertension. Finally, we have asked two renowned trialists to teach us a lesson on sample size calculation when planning a clinical trial (see their contribution under 'Lessons in Trial Statistics' on page 35).

We hope you will enjoy this issue for an inspiratory reading experience, and remain

sincerely yours,

Dan Atar

Hideo Kusuoka

Victor Serebruany