Preface

As the upper layer of the epidermis and the boundary of the body to the environment, the stratum corneum has become the object of intensive studies in the last years. Consisting of non-living cells, the stratum corneum fulfils significant protective and regulatory functions. The kinetics of penetration, the reservoir function and the control of the proliferation and desquamation are only a few aspects determined by the stratum corneum. A series of new experimental methods has been developed and improved in the last years to investigate the structure and function of this special skin layer.

The present issue addresses the special topic 'Structure and Function of the Stratum corneum as a Border Organ'. It includes the summaries of the presentations given during the workshop on this topic that was organized by the Center of Experimental and Applied Cutaneous Physiology in co-operation with L'Oréal in November 2000 in Berlin. Participants from nine countries presented and discussed the state of the art in this special field of skin physiology.

In association with the workshop, an Honorary Colloquium was organized on the occasion of the 65th birthday of Prof. Hans Schaefer, who has influenced and stimulated

research in the field of skin physiology for more than 30 years. Over 100 close colleagues, friends and former students of Prof. Schaefer came to Berlin in honor of his outstanding activities and results, and in remembrance of the time they worked together.

Prof. Schaefer retired from his position at L'Oréal and has returned to Berlin, where his scientific carrier started in 1972, as Professor at the Virchow Hospital, which is now part of the Medical Faculty Charité. He played a considerable part in the foundation of the Center of Experimental and Applied Cutaneous Physiology at the Department of Dermatology of the Charité. He actively participates in basic research and the education of students and young research fellows.

The present issue of the journal is dedicated to Prof. Hans Schaefer.

Berlin, January 2001

Prof. Dr. *Wolfram Sterry*

Director of
Dermatology Clinic at the Charité

Prof. Dr. *Jürgen Lademann*

Director of the Center of Experimental
and Applied Cutaneous Physiology (CCP)

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Fax +41 61 306 12 34
E-Mail karger@karger.ch
www.karger.com

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