Preface

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For over five years, the standardization of methodologies has been the main goal of a series of Expert Meetings that have provided a forum for extensive debate on various disputed areas of growth disorders and growth hormone (GH) therapy. The 1st KIGS (Pharmacia International Growth Database) Expert Meeting on Growth and Growth Disorders took place in November 1995 in Positano, Italy. The meeting covered auxological standards for height and bone maturation, and the proceedings were published as a supplement to *Hormone Research* (1996, vol. 45, suppl. 2). One year later, the 2nd KIGS Expert Meeting, held at Lake Como, Italy, addressed issues relating to children born short for gestational age and to the measurement of body composition in children (*Hormone Research* 1997, vol. 48, suppl. 1). The 3rd Expert Meeting, held in Sorrento, Italy, in 1998, was the first to include data from KIMS (Pharmacia International Metabolic Database), and focused on the measurement of GH in the clinical setting. In addition, participants discussed the importance of databases such as KIGS and KIMS in evidence-based medicine. Again, the proceedings were published in *Hormone Research* (1999, vol. 51, suppl. 1). The 4th KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting was held in Taormina, Italy, in November 1999. On this occasion, the subject of the meeting was GH and bone, and the topics covered included the use of different markers of bone strength, and methods for assessing fracture risk (*Hormone Research* 2000, vol. 54, suppl. 1).

The 5th KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting was held on February 2–3, 2001, in Windsor, UK. The two major topics addressed were GH sensitivity and the standardization of the measurement of insulin-like growth factor I (IGF-I). There were three main reasons for choosing IGF-I measurement for discussion: first, recent research has shown that the concentration of IGF-I in the circulation is a variable indicating the response to GH, particularly in adults. Secondly, IGF-I values also have a role to play in assessing the compliance of patients. Thirdly, IGF-I levels are relevant to the short-term and long-term safety of GH therapy. Thus, for clinical practice as well as for legal reasons, it has become important to measure IGF-I before, during and after GH therapy. The need for a consensus on how to measure IGF-I and interpret the findings is thus an urgent and essential issue. The reason for choosing GH sensitivity for discussion at this Expert Meeting relates to the current view that the GH–IGF axis is the Janus head to the insulin axis. Both systems display partly similar and partly contrasting patterns of regulation, and are also interconnected through the occurrence of clinical disorders such as GH deficiency, diabetes mellitus, and the metabolic syndrome. In the field of diabetology, the patient's sensitivity or insensitivity to insulin has already become part of the general concept for managing disease and treatment. As regards the GH–IGF configuration, insensitivity is an acknowledged entity, whereas the wider concept of sensitivity (insensitivity being, in fact, a special case) is now gaining in importance. The meeting was,

therefore, designed to allow a group of endocrinologists and basic scientists to share their experiences, and to exchange knowledge about accepted concepts and new ideas pertaining to metabolic regulation. It was acknowledged that pharmacoepidemiological surveys, such as KIGS and KIMS, are important sources of many different types of clinical data and make a substantial contribution to the progression of evidence-based medicine.

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and Pharmacia Corporation, Stockholm, for their continuing support of these meetings. The editors would also like to thank the members of the KIGS/KIMS Strategic Planning Committees, as well as the invited experts, for their valuable contribution to the meeting in Windsor. We hope that anyone involved in the treatment of GH deficiency or acromegaly will find the topics discussed at the 5th KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting, and presented in this supplement, to be of use in the clinical setting, and that the organizers will continue to support this series of meetings in the future.