Foreword

It has been a tradition for many years for Novo Nordisk to provide a forum at which internationally renowned experts in the field of growth hormone (GH) research and endocrinology meet with experienced paediatricians and adult endocrinologists with the aim of sharing their knowledge. The focus of this year's symposium was on the latest findings relating to basic research in molecular biology, and on other issues which continue to be challenging although they have been regularly debated in the past.

The first part of the symposium dealt with the molecular biology of the GH-IGF system and incorporated a comprehensive update on the genetics of isolated GH deficiency and, in addition, an overview of the clinical impact of molecular diagnostics in the field of endocrinology. Since the quantification of molecular polymorphisms as a prerequisite to hormonal treatment has become a favoured practice among clinicians, the need was felt to distinguish clearly between ongoing research and valid, current practice.

In the paediatrics session, it became evident that our deepening of clinical knowledge is inextricably linked with the data collection of rare diseases such as septo-optic dysplasia. It is interesting to note that although GH treatment was approved by the regulatory authorities several years ago, no consensus has been achieved yet on whether or not short stature is associated with psychologi-

cal deficits. Advancements in this field will be influenced by the anticipated approval of IUGR (as in France and the USA) as an indication in Europe from 2003 onwards.

The experience of paediatric nephrologists who have monitored GH treatment in children with chronic renal failure is valuable to their counterparts who treat adults, as the paediatric experience allows for a better understanding of the pharmacotherapeutics of GH and its efficacy. The current understanding of the anabolic effects of GH on muscle and bone will widen the scope of GH in the treatment of adult patients, and will, hopefully, also serve as a deterrent against the misuse of this hormone among athletes and body builders.

The focal point of the final session of the symposium was the recently discovered Ghrelin, which links the lipid, gastrointestinal, and the GH-IGF-1 systems. Ghrelin is also thought to be clinically relevant in the treatment of appetite disorders.

The guest editors of this supplement to *Hormone Research* would like to thank the authors, speakers, and all other participants for the fruitful discussions during the meeting. We are also grateful to Novo Nordisk for their continued support in organising this event and in publishing its proceedings.

*Helmuth G. Dörr
Michael B. Ranke
Christian Wüster*