Preface

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The idea of the KIGS/KIMS (Pharmacia International Growth Database/Pharmacia International Metabolic Database) Expert Meetings was born out of the intention to expand knowledge in the field of growth and growth hormone (GH) therapy by providing a forum for debate to a group of experts coming from different areas of expertise. In particular, controversial and less well-known areas were chosen and a process of consensus formation and standardization of methodology was attempted. Previous meetings have focused on various topics. The 1st KIGS Expert Meeting was held in November 1995 in Positano, Italy, and reviewed auxological standards for height and bone maturation (proceedings published in *Hormone Research* 1996, vol. 45, suppl. 2). The subject of the 2nd Expert Meeting, which took place a year later at Lake Como, Italy, was the evaluation of body composition in children born short for gestational age (*Hormone Research* 1997, vol. 48, suppl. 1). The next meeting, held in Sorrento, Italy, in 1998, incorporated KIMS for the first time. This 3rd KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting covered the topic of GH measurement in the clinical setting, and also addressed the importance of large-scale databases such as KIGS and KIMS in evidence-based medicine (*Hormone Research* 1999, vol. 51, suppl. 1). A year later, the 4th KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting took place in Taormina, Italy. This meeting focused on GH and bone, and participants discussed the use of different markers of bone strength and methods for assessing fracture risk (*Hormone Research* 2000, vol. 54, suppl. 1). In 2001, the 5th KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting was held in Windsor, UK, and addressed the topics of GH sensitivity and the standardization of the measurement of insulin-like growth factor I (*Hormone Research* 2001, vol. 55, suppl. 2).

It is now accepted that GH plays a role as a major metabolic regulator from birth to senescence, and that GH deficiency (GHD) is a disease state that exists throughout the entire lifespan. In practical terms, however, most attention so far has been given to the childhood years and the years of mature adult life. In contrast, little is known about the role of GH and disorders of GHD during critical phases of life such as early infancy, puberty, the transition from adolescence to adult life, and during senescence. Changes in GH physiology, in terms of secretion and sensitivity, occur in these specific groups, and may profoundly affect the treatment modalities of GHD. This meeting, the 6th in the series of KIGS/KIMS Expert Meetings, focused on the alterations in GH physiology at the different stages of life – early infancy, puberty, adolescence and old age – and the challenges of managing GHD in patients in these specific groups.

The participants in the 6th KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting would like to express their gratitude to Patrick Wilton, Margaretha Lindell, Maria Kołtowska-Häggström and Pharmacia Corporation, Stockholm, for their ongoing support of these meetings. The editors would also like to thank the members of the KIGS/KIMS Strategic Planning Committees and the invited experts for their participation and valuable contributions. We hope that the information discussed at the 6th KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting and presented in this supplement will be of interest to all those involved in the treatment of GHD and of benefit in the clinical setting. We hope that the organizers will continue to support this series of meetings in the future.

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