Editorial

When we started our work on cochlear implants some 20 years ago, I did not anticipate at all that cochlear implants would become such an important issue in audiology and neuro-otology. At that time it was still an open question whether or not it would be possible to evoke meaningful sensations by stimulating the auditory nerve electrically. Applying single-electrode systems, we were glad when the implant provided auditory support to speech-reading. Nowadays, it seems normal when we achieve speech perception without visual support. We should bear in mind, however, that some do not and that these implant recipients deserve special attention. In addition to these clinical achievements cochlear implants also provide a wonderful opportunity for basic scientific research in hearing. The implant enables us to exert control over the spatial and temporal distribution pattern of the activity in the auditory nerve, it enables us to measure back the response of the nerve to the electrical stimulus, and it provides us with a behavioral response – a combination of possibilities undreamt of only a decade ago.

In 2002 we organized a meeting in Utrecht, The Netherlands, focused on thorough discussions of the clinical and scientific aspects of implantable hearing aids. Although there were already many meetings in the field, we felt that there was a need for this focused meeting in

which all papers were presented upon invitation. Participation was limited to 100 persons, and half the time was allotted to discussions. Much of the work presented was in progress and, at the time, unsuited for publication. However, a number of papers reported research that neared completion and these papers have been included in this special session. Two of the papers have been published before in *Audiology and Neuro-Otology*, one that was submitted already [Smoorenburg et al: 2002;7:335–347] and one review paper on deafness genes that did not quite fit the present issue [Cryns and van Camp: 2004;9:2–22]. The present issue spans the whole range from bone-anchored hearing aids to brainstem implants. We hope that it may serve the reader.

I wish to acknowledge the principal sponsor of this meeting, the Amplifon Centre of Research and Studies together with the affiliated Dutch company Beter Horen, and the co-sponsors Advanced Bionics Europe, Cochlear Europe in cooperation with Newmedic Belgium and Med-El, Innsbruck. Without their support it would have been impossible to organize the meeting and we would not have had the reflection of this meeting in the present special issue.

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