Preface

The KIGS/KIMS (Pfizer International Growth Database/Pfizer International Metabolic Database) Expert Meetings were initiated with the aim of expanding 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 the meetings, particular focus is put on controversial and less well-known areas in the field, and consensus formation and standardization of methodology are 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, the 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 (IGF-I) [*Hormone Research* 2001, vol 55,

suppl 2]. The 6th KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting held in 2002 in Florence, Italy, 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 GH deficiency (GHD) in patients in these specific groups.

The latest in the series of Expert Meetings, held in Paris, France, in 2004 focused on the role of IGF-I parameters, covering the three distinct areas of diagnosis, efficacy and safety. There is a need for more robust normative IGF-I data for adequate diagnosis of GHD. The importance of IGF-I with regard to efficacy is questionable – while change in IGF-I is related to growth response, its relationship with metabolic effects is less clear. In the area of safety, short-term effects, such as water retention, are well known to be related to IGF-I, while the long-term carcinogenic effects of IGF-I are still the subject of debate.

The participants of the 7th KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting would like to express their gratitude to Patrick Wilton, Margaretha Lindell, Maria Kołtowska-Hägström and Pfizer 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 topics discussed at the 7th 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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