Foreword

The aims of this issue of *Digestive Diseases on Recent Advances in Gastrointestinal Pharmacology and Therapeutics* are eminently clear: to provide the entire gastrointestinal readership, including the biomedical industry, a most timely, succinct, yet complete overview on where we are in gastrointestinal (GI) and liver pharmacology. Topics that are covered in extenso include: acid suppressant therapy, antidiarrheal agents, serotonergic drugs, CCK antagonists, neurokinin receptor-antagonists, peripheral opioid receptor ligands, drugs affecting visceral sensitivity, rescue anti-*H. pylori* treatments, biologic therapies in IBD, probiotics, pharmacologic treatment of acute pancreatitis, and emerging therapies for viral hepatitis and liver fibrosis. All chapters are written by distinguished international experts in their respective fields.

This is truly a beautiful intriguing collection of cutting-edge articles, adequately summarizing the state-of-affairs in GI and liver pharmacology. I personally thoroughly enjoyed reading all chapters and learned a great deal. The overall quality, concept and depth of this monograph reflect the exceptional talents of its chief designers, Professor Carmelo Scarpignato and Professor Francesco Di Mario.

What are the striking characteristics of this landmark issue? Of the many that could be mentioned I selected the following:

- the encyclopedic nature of the reviews, illustrating in depth the very latest in GI pharmacology and giving a detailed account of both basic and clinical current science;
- the selection of the topics, encompassing all areas where GI and liver pharmacology has progressed over the last few years;

- the intelligent design and the overall exceptional quality of the various reviews, which will surprise even the astute reader. Moreover, the remarkable uniformity in style facilitates easy reading and absorbing of the material presented;
- the critical tone, applied when analyzing the literature in general, the discrepancies, the vagaries of patient selection, the methodologies of drug evaluation, etc.;
- the extensive referencing, accurately supporting the thorough analyses and concluding statements. Bringing all this information together in one issue is advantageous and useful when compared to its dispersion in separate articles and journals.

In general, drug development in gastroenterology has not been extremely commercially successful over the past few years. This is certainly not explained by a lack of un-

met needs in our specialty. If anything, gastroenterology is indeed characterized by an overwhelming number of unmet clinical needs. Just think of the functional disorders like dyspepsia and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS), where the pharmacological struggle continues. Neither is the lack of a mega success explained by a lack of new molecules or principles as readily seen by browsing through this issue. This is not the forum to expand on the many possible reasons for this problem but certainly to some extent it is explained by the tedious and difficult nature of drug evaluation and the often complex and heterogeneous composition of patient cohorts. One can only hope that this superb issue will play a useful role in further stimulating the interest of basic and clinical researchers and the biomedical industry for further development in GI and liver pharmacology and therapeutics. Let us hope

that soon the bewildering plethora of novel pharmaceutical agents will give rise to truly successful and clinically meaningful blockbusters. This will ultimately translate in a booster for our discipline, including the generation of resources for furthering basic and clinical research.

In closing, let me congratulate the maestros Carmelo Scarpignato and Francesco Di Mario for superbly editing their *opus magnum*. The monograph reflects their insight, devotion and timeless energy in designing the various chapters and in selecting such an excellent panel of world authorities. It is my expectation that this issue will rapidly become and remain the bible of GI pharmacology for quite some years to come.

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