Preface

KIGS and KIMS are Pfizer's long-running international databases about the effect of growth hormone (GH) therapy on growth and metabolism, respectively. The KIGS/KIMS Expert Meetings share the aim of the databases of expanding knowledge in the field of growth and GH therapy. The meetings provide a debating forum for groups of experts from different areas of expertise. In particular, controversial and less well-known areas have been chosen for debate, and a process of consensus formation and standardization of methodology has been attempted.

The 1st KIGS Expert Meeting (before the advent of KIMS) held in 1995 addressed the subject of bone maturation and idiopathic short stature (*Hormone Research* 1996, vol. 45, suppl. 2). During the second meeting, in 1996, the subject under discussion was the evaluation of body composition in children born small for gestational age (*Hormone Research* 1997, vol. 48, suppl. 1). The 3rd Expert Meeting, held in 1998, incorporated KIMS for the first time and covered the topic of GH measurements in the clinical setting. It also addressed the role 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 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 Expert Meeting 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). During the meeting in 2002, participants discussed the alteration in GH physiology at different stages of life, including early infancy, puberty, adolescence and old age, and the challenges of managing GH deficiency in patients at these life stages (*Hormone Research* 2003, vol. 60, suppl. 1). The following KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting, in 2004, focused on

the diagnostic value of IGF-I, and its role in determining the efficacy and safety of GH therapy (*Hormone Research* 2004, vol. 62, suppl. 1). The 2005 meeting, covered two subjects: methods to determine insulin sensitivity in clinical practice, as well as the relationship between GH and cognition (*Hormone Research* 2005, vol. 64, suppl. 3).

The current 9th KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting was held in Stresa, Italy, in March 2006. In discussing the relationship between growth and metabolism in skeletal muscle, the enormous plasticity of this tissue was a recurring theme. The influences of diet, exercise, and the changing hormonal milieu (including off-label supplementation) on the skeletal muscle of children, young adults, and the elderly were each examined. At the cellular level, sensitive genetic techniques for elucidating GH signalling cascades were described, whereas at the whole body level, the methodology behind the study of body composition was discussed extensively. Only by developing and standardizing methodology further across study centres will our understanding of the complex interaction between GH and skeletal muscle continue to develop.

The participants of the 9th KIGS/KIMS Expert Meeting would like to thank Patrick Wilton, Margaretha Lindell, Maria Kołtowska-Häggström and Pfizer Endocrine Care for their ongoing support of these meetings. The editors would also like to thank the members of the KIGS/KIMS Strategic Advisory Boards, and the invited experts for their participation and valuable contributions. We hope that this supplement will be of interest and of use to all those involved in the treatment of GH deficiency and to the wider clinical and scientific community. We sincerely hope that the organizers will continue to support this series of meetings in the coming years.

Michael B. Ranke, Tübingen, Germany
Vera Popović-Brkić, Belgrade, Serbia