

## Preface

Twenty-three years have passed since a small group of scientists and physicians met in Amsterdam to discuss the early results of surfactant replacement therapy with a porcine surfactant, poractant alfa (Curosurf®), developed by Tore Curstedt and Bengt Robertson in their laboratory in Stockholm. The aim of this first meeting was to plan future clinical and basic research with pulmonary surfactants. This quite small meeting evolved into annual International Workshops on Surfactant Replacement Therapy and the 24th was held on June 4–6, 2009, in Ljubljana. This year's workshop was dedicated to Bengt Robertson, one of the founders of the group and an outstanding scientist and researcher, who sadly died in December 2008 after a long illness (see *Neonatology* 2009; 95:VI–VIII). Bengt was remembered by all those in attendance for his immense contributions to the success of previous meetings and they sent their condolences to his large family circle, some of whom were able to attend the workshop. In addition to his great intellect and academic achievements, Bengt will also be remembered for his human touch. He always managed to include every participant, young and old, and encouraged researchers from all over the world to join our group. The first Bengt Robertson Memorial Lecture was delivered by his long-time friend and close scientific collaborator Tore Curstedt.

The 12th Nils W. Svenningsen Memorial Lecture was given by one of Nils' closest colleagues in Obstetrics from Lund, Ingemar Ingemarsson. This lecture was entitled 'Fetal Monitoring During Labor' and it reflected the important role of perinatal care in achieving optimal outcomes for high-risk newborn infants. This final Nils W. Svenningsen Memorial Lecture also illustrated that Nils' great achievements in neonatology were based on his

strong character and ability to develop collaborations with obstetricians making him a true perinatologist. Although his memorial lectures have come to an end after 12 years, we, his friends and collaborators will never forget Nils.

Some practising clinicians may be content with currently available treatments and believe that all that is essential has already been discovered; they may actually be afraid of new information as this poses a threat to their own universe. On the other hand, the innate curiosity of researchers and scientists forces them to pose questions and search for answers that may be invisible to others. Six distinguished scientists participated as invited speakers in this year's workshop entitled 'New Insights into the Pathogenesis and Management of Neonatal Lung Disease'. In addition to Ingemar Ingemarsson, Otto Helve from Helsinki described how pulmonary fluid balance in the human newborn infant influences the initial adaptation to extrauterine life and has a role in various acute neonatal respiratory disorders. Christian Speer from Würzburg provided an update on pre- and postnatal factors in the pathogenesis of bronchopulmonary dysplasia, and Jatinder Bhatia from Augusta discussed the interplay between nutrition and lung growth and disease in infancy. Roger Soll from Burlington who is editor of the neonatal section of the Cochrane Library gave an overview on recent clinical trials for respiratory failure in the newborn, and finally Eduardo Bancalari summarized the many ventilation weaning strategies in relation to outcome in ill newborn infants. It seems clear that reducing the time on mechanical ventilation decreases the risks of both bronchopulmonary dysplasia and neurodevelopmental delay in preterm infants.

Many new exciting experimental and clinical observations related to surfactant therapy and pulmonary disorders were also reported in the form of 18 oral presentations and 12 posters. These contributions dealt with topics such as treatment of meconium aspiration with surfactant, influence of nutrition on surfactant lipids, diagnosis of chorioamnionitis and its effect on efficacy of surfactant, genetic basis of respiratory distress syndrome, oxygen toxicity during the neonatal period, new methods of respiratory support, prevention of bronchopulmonary dysplasia, postnatal corticosteroid treatment and, among others, the long-term outcome of infants with chronic

oxygen dependency. The current issue of *Neonatology* containing the articles and abstracts from the workshop reminds us again how vivid this field of science is and how much we owe to Bengt Robertson, a pioneer and leader in surfactant research.

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