Foreword

The enteric nervous system in health and disease

The purpose of this workshop was to bring together scientists pursuing fundamental research into the physiology and pharmacology of the enteric nervous system (ENS) and clinical researchers concerned with drug development for gastrointestinal disease management. The planning of the programme was undertaken by a core group of gastroenterologists and researchers, namely Arnold Berstad, Hans Glise, Hans Graffner, Michael Kamm, Denis McCarthy, and Rune Sjødahl, and the meeting provided a forum for exchange of research ideas, as well as for presentation of specific research data. The focus of this meeting was to look at current gaps in our knowledge and to assess how best we can proceed to improve that knowledge and ultimately develop therapeutic tools.

The first session (chapter 1) addressed our way of thinking about the function of the ENS, from a gastroenterological and psychological perspective. The second session (chapter 2) covered the developmental aspects of the ENS, normal neural function, and receptor types, which may form potential therapeutic targets. The third and fourth sessions examined the interrelationships between the ENS and surrounding nerves (chapter 3) and tissues (chapter 4). In session V (chapter 5), visceral pain was discussed in

terms of peripheral and central sensitisation and the sixth session (chapter 6) assessed the integrative aspects of the ENS—neural and chemical modulation. Last, but not least, in session VII (chapter 7), we attempted to relate the ENS to gastrointestinal diseases. The supplement consists of original papers from each speaker, and each chapter (representing a session at the workshop) is introduced and summarised to enable readers to obtain an overview. At the end of the supplement, concluding remarks have been added by Marcello Costa, which put the whole workshop into perspective.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the participants for their dedicated involvement and in particular express our gratitude to Karin Wiberger and Ewa Jonsson for such excellent organisation of the workshop. We are also indebted to Madeline Frame who, with able secretarial assistance from Linda Hug, has compiled the chapters for the supplement and written the introductions and summaries.

M COSTA
H GLISE
R SJÖDAHL
Editors