Preface

The 41st annual Symposium on the Biology of Skin addressed “The Fundamentals of Hair Biology” in Snowmass Village, Colorado from July 25 to 29, 1992. This topic was last considered at this symposium in 1986. This year’s meeting presented the opportunity to discuss the most modern concepts in the molecular and cellular biology of the hair follicle, the control of cycling in the hair follicle, and the alterations in hair biology that are found in cutaneous medicine. The format of this meeting has been changed somewhat from former years; 18 formal oral presentations were mixed with discussion of 27 posters. The new format permitted involvement of more scientists in the presentation and discussion of various aspects of hair biology and disease, and it greatly enhanced the lively exchange of information and ideas. The meeting brought together biologists; molecular, cellular and developmental biologists; pharmacologists; ultrastructural biologists; cutaneous biologists; and academic and clinical dermatologists. Scientists from academic departments, research institutes, and the pharmaceutical industry were well represented.

The format of this symposium has always been to bring together cutaneous biologists and other scientists in basic and clinical research fields and to consider one aspect of cutaneous biology in detail. These meetings and the published proceedings have shown how the skin can be a model for the study of universal mechanisms in biology. They have also encouraged the development and application of new ideas and techniques in cutaneous biology.

The hair follicle is an interesting model through which one can understand many important biologic functions involved in morphogenesis, growth and development, and cyclical control of organ function. It is affected by inflammation, hormones, aging, ultraviolet and X-irradiation, growth factors, and pharmacologic manipulation and is a site for development of malignancy. The complex cellular interactions and molecular signals that control hair cycling and regeneration are important models of human biology. The site and activation of stem cells and the interactions of epithelial, mesenchymal, and pigment cells can all be studied and better understood in this model. Powerful new approaches to molecular and cellular biology are being applied to the study of the hair follicle, and this was a major impetus for the organization of this symposium. The content of this meeting is well represented in the papers in this special supplement issue, which include the oral presentations and some of the best poster presentations selected from this meeting.

For the past 15 years, Dr. Kirk Wuepper has been involved in the organization of the annual Symposium on the Biology of Skin at Salishan Lodge and more recently at Snowmass Village. He has been Director of the Symposium since 1980 and has organized conferences on 11 important topics in cutaneous biology: photobiology and photomedicine, the dermis, the keratinocyte, oncogenic viruses, immunobiology, genetics and prenatal diagnosis, nutrition, pigment cell biology and oncology, vascular elements of the dermis, receptor biology, and hair biology. For each individual topic, scientific experts in the area of focus were invited to be co-directors of the meeting, and scientists from a wide range of specialties were invited to participate. This meeting has been an exciting international effort, combining scientists with basic and clinical research expertise from Europe, the Pacific Rim, and the Americas. Kirk Wuepper carried on the stellar example of Dr. William Montagna, the founder of the Symposium on the Biology of Skin, and continued to make this meeting a crucible for the creation of new ideas and perspectives on the biology of the skin. The journal supplement issue and books containing the proceedings of this meeting have been classics in the cutaneous biology literature and provide important reference sources for students of cutaneous biology in graduate and medical schools, in research institutes, and in the pharmaceutical industry. Dr. Wuepper deserves our admiration and thanks for his 15 years of effort on the behalf of cutaneous biology.

We also thank the coordinating staff, Mrs. Diane Zoller and Mrs. Ruth Ann Smith, for their efforts in the organization of this meeting. We also appreciate the support of the officers and Directors of the Cutaneous Biology Foundation who oversee the planning and financial support for this meeting. This conference has been supported for the past 25 years by a conference grant from the National Institutes of Health and has also been supported faithfully by a number of firms in the pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries that have a strong commitment to basic research in cutaneous biology. Over the 41 years of this meeting, thousands of scientists, physicians, and students from around the world have attended this meeting and benefited from the perspectives developed. We anticipate that this tradition will continue in Snowmass under the leadership of the new symposium director, Dr. David A. Norris. We also appreciate the efforts of Dr. Edward O'Keefe and his Editorial Board, which have made possible the publication of the papers in this special supplement issue of The Journal of Investigative Dermatology.

The supplement issue is dedicated to Professor John Ebling, who died shortly before this meeting. His pioneering work in the field of hair biology is a major part of the foundation on which the science presented in this volume is built.

David A. Norris, M.D.
Kirk D. Wuepper, M.D.
Andrew Messenger, M.B., FRCP

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