

## Editorial

The present issue of *Neurochemistry International* includes proceedings of a symposium entitled: "Glutamine, Glutamate and GABA in the CNS: Transport and Metabolism in Health and Disease" held on 24–28 August 2002 in Wierzba, a Convention Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences located in a picturesque, isolated, forest-shielded Mazurian Lakes region in Poland, 220 km north of Warsaw. Both the location, and the title of the conference are likely to sound familiar to regular readers of *Neurochemistry International*, and in particular neuroscientists interested in neurotransmitter metabolism and function. A symposium under a similar title was held in Wierzba, a little more than 3 years ago, and the proceedings appeared in vol. 37, nos. 1–2, 2000 of *Neurochemistry International*. The present symposium thus conforms the organizers' plans to make the Wierzba conferences evolve as a cyclic event. For a series of events to make sense, each must be both adequately hooked to the past, and carry some winds of change. The past is clearly represented by the leitmotif of the program: we dwell on the glutamate/glutamine cycle. The new winds are manifested by a stronger than before representation of the inhibitory neurotransmitter GABA and more focus on cell membrane transport of all three amino acids, including an account of the explosion of new data on the role of glutamine transport in the Glu–GABA–Gln homeostasis. In our attempts, to make the program of the symposium fit best to the state of the art, we were very much helped by an Advisory Committee consisting of acknowledged experts in the field: Frode Fonnum (Kjeller), Leif Hertz (Gilmour), Jerzy Lazarewicz (Warsaw), Jon Storm-Mathisen (Oslo) and Simo Oja (Tampere). It was of particular pleasure to all of us to listen to the excellent opening lecture given by Professor Ole-Petter Ottersen, one of the pioneers in the field of immunocytochemistry of amino acids in the CNS. His presentation convincingly documented the power of the immunogold technique in visualizing mutual spatial relations between glutamate, GABA and glutamine at the ultrastructural level. The absolute novelty of the 2002 conference were the junior sessions, a chance given to the Ph.D. students and just graduated scientists, to subject their achievements to an exchange of views between themselves, and with top experts in the field, in a generation gap-filling mode. Some of the debuts are reflected in the present issue.

Shift of focus of the program plus the inclusion of junior sessions were the factors that made us decide to invite as many as 30 new speakers, out of the total of 41, that presented their lectures during this symposium. As previously, the speakers represented many nations: they came from Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Israel, Norway, The Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Switzerland and USA.

We are indebted to a number of agencies, whose generous support has made this conference a scientifically, and also a socially rewarding event. As was the case with the previous symposium, this one was sponsored by Elsevier Science Ltd. and the Medical Research Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences, whose newly elected Director, Professor Zbigniew Czernicki honored the participants with an address printed in the conference program. The newly acquired, no less generous sponsors were the International Society for Neurochemistry, the Polish State Committee for Scientific Research (KBN), and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Warsaw, to whom we owe finances that were needed to organize the junior sessions. Very special thanks are due to the members of the local organizing committee, all being staff members or students of the Medical Research Center, for their endurance in coping with all the inevitable difficulties in the process of organizing the conference, and devotion to fulfill the professional and everyday needs of the participants. The key figures in this capacity were Hanna Klinowska and Wojciech Hilgier, helped by Inez Frzceko, Magdalena Zielińska, Marta Sidoryk and Marta Obara, all from the Department of Neurotoxicology, and Dorota Makarewicz from the Department of Neurochemistry. Last but not the least, our sincere thanks go to the Management of the Convention Center for providing competent services during the sessions and offering excellent food and accommodation.

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