

PREFACE

A Symposium on Retinal Degenerations has been held in conjunction with the biennial International Congress of Eye Research (ICER) since 1984. These Retinal Degeneration Symposia have allowed scientists and clinicians from around the world to convene and present their new research findings. The Symposia have been organized to allow sufficient time for discussions and one-on-one interactions in a relaxed atmosphere, where international friendships and collaborations would be fostered.

The XI International Symposium on Retinal Degeneration (also known as RD2004) was held from August 23-28, 2004 in Perth, Western Australia. The meeting brought together 151 scientists, retinal specialists in ophthalmology and trainees in the field from all parts of the world. In the course of the meeting, 36 platform and 80 poster presentations were given, and a majority of these are presented in this proceedings volume. New discoveries and state of the art findings from most research areas in the field of retinal degenerations were presented. The RD2004 meeting was highlighted by three special lectures. The first was given by Dr. Paul Sieving, Director of the National Eye Institute, National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland, USA. Dr. Sieving discussed the evolution of understanding ocular diseases. The second lecture by Professor Ian Constable, Director of the Lions Eye Institute, Nedlands, Western Australia, covered clinical imperatives in retinal degeneration research. The third was by Professor Thaddeus Dryja, Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, who discussed the progress to date on understanding the etiology of RP and allied diseases.

We want to give special acknowledgement to the local organizers of the Symposium, Drs. Elizabeth P. Rakoczy, Sasha Pental and Brian King from Perth. Mrs. Stacey Scaffardi, Administrative Assistant to Professor Rakoczy, worked tirelessly for months preparing an extraordinarily smooth meeting, a wonderful social program and excursion. We also thank the staff of the Burswood International Resort Hotel, the venue of the meeting, for all their help.

The Symposium received international financial support from a number of organizations. We are particularly pleased to thank The Foundation Fighting Blindness, Owings Mills, Maryland, for its continuing support of this and the previous biennial Symposia, without which we could not have held these important meetings. In addition, for the second time, the National Eye Institute of the National Institutes of Health contributed to the

meeting. This additional funding allowed us to provide 20 Travel Awards to young investigators and trainees working in the field of retinal degenerations. The Foundation Fighting Blindness also contributed to the Travel Awards program providing 14 Travel Awards. The response to the Travel Awards program was extraordinary, with 74 applicants competed for the 34 Awards.

We also acknowledge the diligent and outstanding efforts of Ms. Holly Whiteside, who carried out most of the administrative aspects of the RD2004 Symposium, designed and maintained the meeting website. Holly is the Administrative Manager of Dr. Anderson's laboratory at the Oklahoma Health Sciences Center, and she has become the permanent Coordinator for the Retinal Degeneration Symposia. Her dedicated efforts with the Symposia since RD2000 have provided continuity heretofore not available, and we are deeply indebted to her.

We thank Ms. Laura Hogan, Administrative Assistant in Dr. Hollyfield's program in the Cole Eye Institute at The Cleveland Clinic Foundation, for her help in assembling this volume. Thanks also go to Springer Science+Business Media for its publication.

Joe G. Hollyfield
Robert E. Anderson
Matthew M. LaVail
Cleveland, Ohio
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Hollyfield, J.G.; Anderson, R.; LaVail, M.M. (Eds.)

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