

Preface

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

The XIII International Symposium on Retinal Degeneration (also known as RD2008) was held from September 18–23, 2008 at the Hong Zhu Shan Hotel at the foot of Emei Mountain in the Sichuan Province of China, near Chengdu. The meeting brought together 152 basic and clinician scientists, retinal specialists in ophthalmology, and trainees in the field from all parts of the world. In the course of the meeting, 42 platform and 88 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 RD2008 meeting was highlighted by three special lectures. The first was given by **Glen Prusky**, PhD, Weill Cornell Medical College of Cornell University, New York City, NY. Dr. Prusky discussed the measures of vision in rodents as a tool for evaluating the treatment of retinal degenerative diseases. The second was given by **Kang Zhang**, MD, PhD, on the molecular genetics of Stargardt's Disease. Dr. Zhang's undergraduate degree in biochemistry is from West China University in Chengdu, and he currently is at the Shiley Eye Center, University of California at San Diego, San Diego, CA. The third plenary lecture was given by **Peter Campochiaro**, MD, of the Wilmer Eye Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD. Dr. Campochiaro discussed the role of oxidant stress in macular degeneration.

This Symposium would not have been possible without the support of our colleagues at the Sichuan People's Provincial Hospital and the Department of Ophthalmology of West China Hospital, Sichuan University. **Fan Ying Chuan**, MD, Vice Chairman, Sichuan Ophthalmology Society, Director of Ophthalmology Department, Sichuan Academy of Medical Science & Sichuan Provincial People's Hospital and **Chen Xiao Ming**, MD, Chairman, Sichuan Ophthalmology Society, Director of West China Eye Center, West China Hospital, Sichuan University, gave tirelessly to our effort from the beginning. We are especially grateful to the

administration of the Sichuan People's Provincial Hospital, which provided the financial guarantees necessary to secure the meeting venue. The assistance of **Chen Hui (Robert)**, MD, of the SPPH throughout the planning and the meeting itself were of enormous help to us. We appreciate all of the officers of various medical associations who gave support or participated in the Welcoming Ceremony. These include: **Li Yuan Feng**, MD, President, Sichuan Academy of Medical Science & Sichuan Provincial People's Hospital; **Cai Li**, MD, Vice President, Sichuan Academy of Medical Science & Sichuan Provincial People's Hospital; **Xiong Jun Hao**, MD, Assistant President, Sichuan Academy of Medical Science & Sichuan Provincial People's Hospital; **Fang Yong**, MD, General Secretary, Sichuan Medical Association; **Wang Wei**, MD, Vice General Secretary, Sichuan Medical Association; and **Shi Ying Kang**, MD, President, West China Hospital, Sichuan University.

We were pleasantly surprised that our old friend and colleague Dominic Lam, PhD attended and spoke at our Opening Ceremonies. Dominic is well known in ophthalmology circles in China. As President and CEO of the World Eye Organization, he has been responsible for establishing a number of eye clinics throughout China to provide care for those who cannot afford it. Most recently he established the Thorsten Wiesel Research Institute at West China University in Chengdu, in honor of his mentor Nobel Laureate Thorsten Wiesel.

We also thank the management and staff of the beautiful Hong Zhu Shan Hotel for all of their assistance in making this a truly memorable experience for all of the attendees. We are especially grateful to **Walton Wang**, the hotel representative who worked with us from the outset to make sure that everything went smoothly.

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 fourth time, the National Eye Institute of the National Institutes of Health contributed to the meeting. Funds from these two organizations allowed us to provide 35 Travel Awards to young investigators and trainees working in the field of retinal degenerations. The response to the Travel Awards program was extraordinary, with 74 applicants.

We also acknowledge the diligent and outstanding efforts of Ms. **Holly Whiteside**, who carried out most of the administrative aspects of the RD2008 Symposium, designed and maintained the meeting website, and organized and edited the production of this volume. Holly is the Administrative Manager of Dr. Anderson's laboratory at the University of 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 not available previously, and we are deeply indebted to her. We are also indebted to Dr. **Md. Nawajes A. Mandal**, who served as the Associate Editor of this volume. Dr. Mandal read every manuscript and organized them into thematic blocks.

Finally, we honor the memory of two colleagues who died in 2007. **Ruben Adler** was a great friend to most who attend our RD meetings. He was our keynote speaker in Argentina, where he gave an extraordinary lecture on the hope, reality, and challenges of using stem cells to treat blinding diseases. **Wei Cao** was a colleague at the Dean McGee Eye Institute and also a great friend to many of our attendees. Wei was solely responsible for arranging for this meeting to be held in Sichuan Province and in securing the support of the local organizers. We dedicate this volume to Ruben and Wei.

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