

Preface

While the term “the global epidemic of diabetes” is used frequently both by the popular media and in the medical literature, it is not used in the context of infection. The late Keith Taylor reflects on the historical background of the relationship between viruses and diabetes noting that the association between mumps and diabetes was described in the middle of the nineteenth century, but it was not until 1927 that the Norwegian Army physician Edvard Gundersen published a paper in the *Journal of Infectious Diseases* entitled “Is diabetes of infectious origin?”. The subsequent history of virus infection and diabetes in humans and animals is described eloquently in the Chap. 1 of this book, which contains precisely what is stated in the title; that is, information on diabetes and viruses.

The Editors recruited a galaxy of leading researchers and physicians from many countries including, in alphabetical order, Australia, Cuba, Finland, France, Italy, Japan, Sweden, the UK and the USA, who accepted the challenge to produce rapidly an authoritative account of the current knowledge and research in progress on this important topic, for which the Editors are most grateful.

Many topics are reviewed expertly including the role of autoimmunity, molecular mimicry, genetic factors, immune mechanisms, environmental factors (an ever popular topic on virtually every aspect of human activity), and with a particular emphasis on a number of viruses affecting the pancreas in animals and humans. The text is written in a way that we hope will be understood by general physicians, clinical specialists in diabetes, researchers—especially those involved in immunology and virology—senior nurses, public health workers and medical students. We also hope that the pharmaceutical industry is listening. Throughout we attempted to avoid the description of excessively complex techniques and molecular porn, and simplify technical jargon.

Finally, there is an old military maxim “never attack a revolution”, and—in the context of this book—we should not ignore the direct or indirect role of viruses in the aetiology of diabetes mellitus, but rather continue to explore this intriguing association.

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Diabetes and Viruses

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