

Preface

It is appropriate that this volume should appear on the 100th anniversary of the isolation of *Leptospira* and its discovery as the causative agent of Weil's disease. The last 10 years have seen a resurgence of research activity on *Leptospira*, probably as a result of the availability of whole genome sequences and the development of genetic tools for the manipulation of pathogenic leptospires. The previous decade has seen double the number of papers published on *Leptospira* or leptospirosis than in any previous decade and more than all the publications in the first 50 years of leptospirosis research. It is gratifying that this activity has been accompanied by an increased awareness of the serious disease caused in humans and animals by this global pathogen.

In the years since the publication of "*Leptospira* and Leptospirosis" by Faine et al. (1999, MediSci, Melbourne) it became apparent that it was unlikely that a single person, or even a small group of authors, would be able to find the time to write an updated version. However, although much of the information in that book remains relevant, large parts have become so out of date as to be misleading. The solution to both these problems was to assemble a group of world experts on leptospirosis to contribute to this present volume, which brings together just such a group. There is of necessity some overlap between chapters. This is unavoidable; for example, how can one write about the leptospiral outer membrane without discussing proteins and LPS, which are also key players in pathogenesis and in interactions with the host immune system? The overlap is also desirable, in that each chapter can be read on a stand-alone basis, with reference to other chapters where appropriate.

There are many people to whom I wish to express my heartfelt thanks. First and foremost, I am grateful to the chapter authors in this volume for the alacrity and enthusiasm with which they accepted the invitation to contribute. To my many colleagues and associates over the past decades (too numerous to detail here), I appreciate your willingness to collaborate and to share your wisdom and insight. Many of you are contributors to this volume. However, I would like to express my

particular gratitude to Solly Faine, who has been a mentor, colleague and friend for over 44 years, and who first introduced me to that fascinating organism, the leptospire. Finally, my grateful thanks to my wife Stephanie for her love, patience and forbearance during the preparation of this volume and over the last 40 years.

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