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Preface

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Preface

The FALK Symposium 198 took place in Shenzhen China. It was focused on standards and new developments in the pathogenesis and treatment of inflammatory bowel diseases (IBDs).

The idea of the meeting was to bring the most current information, both in clinical and basic sciences, to all physicians caring for patients with IBD. IBDs are still increasing in incidence and prevalence in the Western world, and there is an even more dramatic increase in the Asian/Pacific area. The factors responsible for this increase in the Asian/Pacific area will be equally important to understand disease pathogenesis in the Western world. A better exchange on research results on IBD between both areas of the world is necessary. The intention to exchange knowledge between both areas was reflected by the concept of the FALK Symposium 198. Indeed, East met West to exchange knowledge, experience and vision.

High quality reviews based on the presentations during the symposium have been provided by the outstanding speakers of the meeting that are now collected in this publication. The first session of the meeting was focused on genetic risk factors for IBD and analyzed whether they play the same role in East and West. It turned out that many genetic risk factors are shared whereas others only play a role in one of the 2 areas. A second session also related to disease pathophysiology discussed environmen-

tal risk factors and whether there might be differences that could explain phenotypical differences. The third session of the meeting and a respective part of the publication highlighted the role of the mucosal innate immune system. It raised the questions regarding whether we can learn from new research data on functions of the intestinal immune system for the development of new therapies. Another part of the meeting discussed disease prevention and whether the avoidance of certain environmental factors can prevent IBD or at least disease flares.

The second day of the meeting started with a session that focused on predictive factors for treatment response and disease outcome, whether similar predictive factors were identified in the West and the Asian/Pacific area. Basics of IBD therapy were discussed in a sixth session, which is also reflected by articles in this publication. New treatment options and the role for biologicals were the topics of the final 2 sessions. Sessions were always chaired by experts from the Asian/Pacific and Western countries together to reflect the overall approach of the meeting. The selection of experts and speakers also reflected the balance in expertise between the regions as the basis for an exchange at eye level. The meeting was regarded to be a great success by the participants. We are sure that the high quality of the FALK meeting 198 in Shenzhen is also reflected by the excellent articles in this publication.

Gerhard Rogler, Zurich

