Challenges for the Autoimmunologist

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Abstract Every 2 years, an International Congress of Autoimmunity is organized and held with the intent of creating a new base for continuing interdisciplinary and international research, including further opportunities to train in the field of autoimmunity. In September 2008, the Congress of Autoimmunity was held in Porto, Portugal, and over the next 6 months, requests were made from a number of key investigators to provide copies of their papers for publication in a special volume of this journal. In addition, a satellite meeting sponsored by the AESKU.KIPP Institute was held in Porto with an attempt of focusing on specific challenges faced by the autoimmunologist. It is hoped that this collection of papers will become a valuable source for researchers in autoimmunity.

The AESKU.KIPP Institute, much like the focus of the Congress of Autoimmunity, attempts to create a new base for continuing interdisciplinary and international research and further training in the field of autoimmunity. The institute is distinguished by the extraordinary synthesis of networked scientific competence and clear orientation to practical issues; it provides ideal conditions for the timely implementation of current research into new diagnostic and therapeutic options. The AESKU.KIPP INSTITUTE initiates and coordinates international research cooperation and development projects. At the same time, it offers the spatial and personnel requirements for the implementation of joint interdisciplinary projects at the Wendelsheim facility. To create a unique platform for

interdisciplinary research in autoimmunity, the AESKU.KIPP INSTITUTE is supported by an active advisory council of experts in autoimmunity committed to the aims of the institute. Under the roof of the nonprofit association of Association for Interdisciplinary Research in Autoimmunity e.V., the AESKU.KIPP INSTITUTE intentionally creates openness towards a diversity of cooperation partners in science and economy, thus providing an ideal environment for the interdisciplinary orientation of its activities and the generation of true benefit for the public. Via an active information policy including symposia and publications, it presents current possibilities of prognosis, diagnostics, and therapy to the public, for the benefit of patients and treating physicians.

This issue contains papers which address problems in rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, the use of the biologics, the antiphospholipid antibody syndrome, postpericardial injury syndromes, the use of intravenous immunoglobulin, the future of stem cell transplantation, the biology of amyloid disease, recent data on both celiac disease as well as infection in autoimmunity, and finally a number of unique problems that are often discussed but require further attention. These include studies of antifibrotic agents, mastocytosis, environment and health, and new diagnostic techniques in autoimmunity. Obviously, it is a potpourri of subjects and is not intended to be a complete overview of cutting-edge issues. We note that there have been dedicated issues of the other official journals of the meeting, *Autoimmunity Reviews* and the *Journal of Autoimmunity*, which likewise focus on critical issues for the autoimmunologist. Finally, towards this end, we were asked to provide a list of some of these papers as well as related publications in these journals that focus on some interesting and key problems in autoimmunology that will be helpful and which address such subjects as immunoregulation, organ-specific autoimmune disease, new diagnostic techniques, the biologics, innate immunity, and cellular and molecular mechanisms that focus on loss of tolerance. The following is a brief list of some relevant citations [1–40] and include, in

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particular, subjects that will be addressed in the next Congress of Autoimmunity in Slovenia in May 2010.

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