

Editorial

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Since the discovery of intracellular lipid binding proteins (originally called “fatty acid binding proteins”, FABPs) more than 30 years ago, the structure, function, and regulation of the genes that encode them have been studied intensely. In 1989, the first conference devoted to intracellular lipid binding proteins brought together the leading researchers in this emerging field. Subsequent conferences held in Europe, North America, and Asia have gradually expanded their scope to include additional proteins interacting with lipids and other lipophilic ligands. The regular recurrence of the International Conference on Lipid Binding Proteins has greatly facilitated collaborations and opened new research venues in a field that has become of increasing importance for the understanding of various chronic diseases and their treatment. The 6th International Conference on Lipid Binding Proteins Conference was held in 2007 in Burnaby/Canada. The current issue of *Molecular and Cellular Biochemistry* contains a selection of papers based on contributions from the conference, highlighting the importance of lipid binding proteins for basic cellular function, in health and disease.

While several of these papers remain focused on FABPs, with regard to structural and mechanistic studies as well as

metabolic implications (Karsenty et al., Velkov et al., Levin et al., Newberry et al.), a large proportion of the conference was devoted to other lipid transport proteins that, either in concert with or independent of iLBPs, influence lipid trafficking and signaling and play important roles in various physiological events and disorders (Barbier et al., Brasaemle et al., Digel et al., Jeppesen et al., Golovko et al., Hirsch-Reinshagen et al.). Much can be learned about the physiological significance of individual proteins from a comparative analysis of their diversity and evolution, as shown in the papers by Beh et al., Dyer et al., and Van der Horst et al. In looking at the phenomics and genomics of lipid metabolism disorders, the contribution by keynote speaker R. Hegele expands the scope of LBP research and illustrates the exciting possibilities of large scale “-omics” research. Through the use of such novel approaches in combination with more traditional physiological and biochemical studies, we can expect that a wealth of new insights into lipid transport and signaling processes will be generated in the near future, and focus prominently at the 7th International Conference for Lipid Binding Proteins in 2010.

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