

Editorial

This special issue of *Neurochemistry International* publishes papers written by speakers who participated in a Symposium entitled: “Glutamate in CNS Metabolism and Neurotransmission: Interactions at the Inter- and Intracellular Level” held on 27–30 August 2005 in Wierzba, a Convention Center of the Polish Academy of Sciences located between two lakes and a forest 3 h drive from Warsaw. It is worth recalling that the same secluded, “no runaway” spot hosted the two previous Wierzba symposia in 1999 and 2002. Like the previous symposia, also this one was held under the glutamate banner, and it likewise dealt with a multitude of issues related to the transport, metabolism and physiological roles of the glutamate–glutamine cycle constituents, and their interplay in health and disease. Readers who wish to assess the progress that has occurred within this thematic *continuum* during these years, are advised to have a glance at the proceedings of the previous symposia that appeared in vol. 37, nos. 2–3, 2000 and vol. 43, nos. 4–5, 2003, respectively, of *Neurochemistry International*.

For the first time the Wierzba Symposium received an institutional blessing of the neuroscience community, by having acquired the status of a satellite symposium of the 20th Biennial Meeting of the ISN in Innsbruck. Two other remarkable features of the present symposium were associated with the participation of two highly distinguished personalities and their roles in, respectively, commencing and rounding up the meeting.

It goes without saying that the demands and expectations of the audience are set, and the level of the symposium is tuned, by the opening lecture. Jeffrey Erickson from New Orleans delivered an excellent, breathtaking opening speech in which he presented evidence of the key role of vesicular glutamate and GABA storage and release in orchestrating the function of cortical circuits. Remarkably, he did this while confronted with the distant, but never the less close and worrisome echoes of the disaster in his home town. We particularly highly value the fact that a return to ruins did not restrain Jeff from preparing an excellent chapter for this issue.

The closing comments were provided by Leif Hertz from Gilmour/Shenyang, a pioneer in the field of astrocyte–neuron interaction and the glutamine/glutamate cycle. His synthetic, but detailed enough views on the state of the art were thrown against the background of this and the previous Wierzba symposia. Leif’s synopsis served as a highly objective basis for assessing the progress in our understanding of the roles of glutamate in the

past two decades. His valuable contribution in this issue has one additional small advantage: it takes away from the organizers the duty of further comments about the content of the symposium. The audience listened to, and discussed with fervor, about 40 presentations by three generations of glutamate believers, and a vast majority of the contributions are reflected in this issue. As previously, the speakers represented many nations, with a notably strong representation of the smallest continent: five participants came from Australia.

We are indebted to the ISN for their generous sponsorship without which it would not have been possible to “make the ends meet”. The Symposium was also sponsored by Elsevier Science Ltd., the Committee of Neurobiology of the Polish Academy of Sciences, and the institutions in which the organizers are employed: the Medical Research Centre and the Danish University of Pharmaceutical Sciences. Very special thanks are due to the members of the local organizing committee, the close collaborators of one of us (JA) from the Department of Neurotoxicology of the Medical Research Centre. The key figures in this capacity were Wojciech Hilgier and Michał Węgrzynowicz who took care for even the smallest logistic details, and Monika Szeliga and Marta Obara, who tirelessly served as guides to the participants who landed at the Warsaw airport which was in the middle of undergoing total reconstruction.

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