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Proceedings of the Fourth International Workshop on Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia: Introduction

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Introduction

Science is the most communal of human endeavors
Lewis Thomas
(*Foreign Affairs* 1984;63:966-94)

The Fourth International Workshop on Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia (MEN) was held at the Methodist Hospital, Houston, TX, October 3–5, 1991. This workshop was patterned on previous workshops held in Kingston, Ontario (1), Cambridge, England (2), and Heidelberg, Germany (3). Prior workshops focused exclusively on the MEN 2 syndrome. The Houston workshop brought together, for the first time, investigators and clinicians studying both MEN 1 and MEN 2 to compare and contrast investigative findings in these two interesting and important genetic cancer syndromes. That this was an international gathering was evidenced by the fact that investigators from five continents were present at this meeting, each presenting a unique view of these syndromes.

A key focus of this meeting was the fostering of discussion and the development of collaborative efforts to localize further the primary genetic abnormalities for these two syndromes and to understand subsequent cellular events leading to disordered cellular growth. Although neither gene had been identified at the time of the Houston workshop, there was evidence of sustained progress toward localization which included more detailed mapping of the loci for MEN1 and MEN2 and identification of genomic clones from the disease gene regions. Several genes in these regions have been cloned and largely excluded as candidate genes, the first step in the process toward the identification of the disease genes.

As a gesture of welcome to the investigators working on MEN 1, it seems appropriate to begin this issue of the Workshop Proceedings with an article by Larsson et al who describe progress toward identification of the MEN 1 gene. Other manuscripts from the major groups working on MEN 1 describe advances toward the localization of the gene, variant syndromes, tumor biology, and experience with clinical management of this syndrome.

The second portion of this issue focuses on consolidation of information regarding the MEN 2 locus. Several groups are now screening libraries containing large segments of DNA from the chromosome 10 centromeric region. One candidate gene thought to be involved in regulation of the cell cycle has been examined and tentatively rejected as a candidate gene. Of particular significance to clinicians were the discussions of reoperation in the management of metastatic medullary thyroid carcinoma and the development of recommendations for the use of genetic screening information. There was a further expansion of

information presented about MEN 2A/cutaneous lichen amyloidosis syndrome, a variant syndrome initially thought to be rare but now identified in at least eight families in diverse geographic locations. Although abstracts of some of the additional material presented are published here (pp. 312-318), other important papers and formal and informal discussions are not covered.

In keeping with the friendly and cooperative spirit of these meetings, an ad hoc committee of MEN 2 investigators was formed to develop technical guidelines for use of DNA probes for genetic screening and to develop a mechanism by which new probes can be shared with interested investigators.

The organizers of the Fourth MEN Workshop are particularly thankful to the Methodist Hospital and the Methodist Hospital Foundation for their financial support and for the beautiful facilities made available for this gathering.*

In addition, financial contributions for support of the Workshop were received from the Dykstra Foundation, Detroit, MI, and the Bin Mahfouz family of Saudi Arabia. We would also like to thank Sandoz Pharmaceuticals Corporation, Norwich Eaton Pharmaceuticals, CIBA-GEIGY Corporation, the Upjohn Company, Merck Sharp & Dohme, Nichols Institute, and Blackwell Scientific Publications for educational grants to support the Workshop.

Finally, we look forward to the Fifth International Workshop on Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia† to be held in the summer of 1994 in Stockholm, Sweden.

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Guest Coeditors

References

1. The First International Workshop on Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia Type 2 Syndromes. *Henry Ford Hosp Med J* 1984;32:217-82.
2. The Second International Workshop on Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia Type 2 Syndromes. *Henry Ford Hosp Med J* 1987;35:93-175.
3. The Third International Workshop on Multiple Endocrine Neoplasia Type 2 Syndromes. *Henry Ford Hosp Med J* 1989;37:98-224.

*The participants were also appreciative of the organization of the workshop and impressed with the warm Texas hospitality of Dr. Gagel's committee (CEJ).

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