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## Preface

Karolinska Institutet was founded in 1810 and, hence, celebrates its 200-year anniversary this year. To mark the occasion, *BBRC* has decided to publish a special issue of the journal composed of minireviews written by scientists from Karolinska Institutet and illustrating recent developments within some areas of biomedical research at the molecular level that have been actively pursued at Karolinska Institutet. Research areas judged to be of particular interest to the *BBRC* readership have been selected for this special issue.

Karolinska Institutet was founded in 1810 by the Swedish King Carl XIII. This was a difficult time period in Swedish history. Sweden had just lost a war, and many wounded soldiers were dying in the field hospitals. Hence, the primary aim of the new Institute was to train war surgeons, although the educational program was broadened to physicians in general in 1811.

Karolinska Institutet was first housed in the “royal bakery” in the old part of the city, but after five years it got its own building close to where the Stockholm City Hall is now located. Here it stayed until 1945, when it was moved to the present campus in Solna.

Karolinska Institutet started with a faculty of four professors. Anders Johan Hagströmer was Professor of Anatomy and Surgery and its first Rector. A chair in chemistry was included in the initial faculty. This was held by Jöns Jacob Berzelius, a prominent chemist who was recognized internationally for his many important discoveries. This was remarkable, since medicine in those days was

generally humanistic, and it is fair to say that Berzelius introduced a scientific approach to medicine at Karolinska Institutet. In this respect, he had several successors during the 19th century (e.g. the well-known anatomist Gustav Retzius), and this development was further promoted by Alfred Nobel's decision in his will in 1895 to entrust Karolinska Institutet with the selection of the Nobel laureates in Physiology or Medicine.

So far, five scientists working at Karolinska Institutet have received the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine. Obviously, they represent important and successfully pursued research areas at the Institute, notably biochemistry, neurobiology and physiology. Other important research fields include immunology, cell and tumor biology, endocrinology, cardiology, blood coagulation, proteomics and molecular genetics, as well as methodological advances such as mass spectrometry and cellular and molecular imaging.

Recent developments within several of these research fields are outlined in the minireviews included in this special issue of *BBRC*. Many of the original discoveries during the past 50 years were also published in this journal, which is another reason for *BBRC* to mark the occasion of the 200-year anniversary of Karolinska Institutet.

*BBRC* editors  
Hans Jörnvall  
Sten Orrenius