



## Foreword

Following up on the 4th and 5th International Melanocortin meetings that were held in Rouen, France (1993) and Sunriver Oregon (2002), the 6th International Melanocortin meeting was held in July 2010 in Utrecht, the Netherlands.

The word “Melanocortin” appeared for the first time in literature in 1979 (Chrétien et al., 1979), it had 800 hits in 2002 (around the time of the Sunriver meeting) and it has now over 3000 hits in PubMed. As in these previous meetings, the melanocortin field was covered broadly with sessions on genetics, physiology, pharmacology, receptor structure and function, translational research, peripheral and central actions of melanocortins, glucose homeostasis, diet-interactions and clinical studies. One may wonder whether it is a good idea to organize a conference on neuropeptides/hormones belonging to the same family rather than specific ones on pigmentation, obesity or adrenal gland function. However previous melanocortin meetings had demonstrated that results from one field were inspiring for important discoveries in another. For instance the discovery of AgRP important for energy balance was based upon its homology with Agouti discovered in pigmentation research (Ollmann et al., 1997). Again in this meeting cross-fertilization of different disciplinary fields took place, like the discovery of MRAPs in adrenal gland with putative impact for brain melanocortin receptors. Due to the enormous increase in research in the melanocortin field, despite 3 exciting days of talks, this Utrecht meeting was unable to cover all of the biology of melanocortins such as the role of melanocortins in pain processing (Vrinten et al., 2001) and inflammation (Catania et al., 2004).

This current special issue of the European Journal of Pharmacology contains the proceedings of the 6th Melanocortin meeting as held in Utrecht in July 2010. Besides reviews covering the role of melano-

cortins on various aspects of physiology, this issue also contains original papers describing novel aspects of melanocortin function. Due to the enthusiasm that was perceived during this last meeting, we expect that it will take only a few years for the 7th Melanocortin meeting to be organized.

### References

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Roger A.H. Adan

*Rudolf Magnus Institute of Neuroscience,  
Department of Neuroscience and Pharmacology,  
University Medical Center Utrecht, University of Utrecht,  
Utrecht, The Netherlands*

Roger D. Cone

*Department of Molecular Physiology & Biophysics,  
Vanderbilt University School of Medicine,  
Nashville, TN, USA*