

Preface

This Special Issue of *FEBS Letters* compiles a selection of contributions presented at a Symposium entitled: Ion channels in virus infection/replication: protein structure and channel function. The symposium was organized by Anna Moroni (University of Milan, Italy) and Gerhard Thiel (University of Darmstadt, Germany) and held at the Palazzo Feltrinelli Gargnano del Garda, Italy on 24–26 October 2002. Virus-encoded ion channels have emerged as a family of primordial proteins that predate the highly selective and regulated channel proteins of bacteria and eukarya. Given their relative simplicity, they offer major advantages to pursue an understanding between structure and function. With this consideration in

mind, the aim of the meeting was to foster collaborations between scientists across disciplines, especially structural biology, biophysics and molecular biology. The collection of papers that follow conveys the wave of excitement and activity in the field, highlighting the progress and also underscoring the challenges ahead of us which augur an even more substantial pace of progress in the near future.

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