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Preface

Taurine (2-aminoethanesulfonic acid) was discovered as a component of ox bile by Tiedeman and Gemlin in 1827. Since then a wealth of knowledge has established taurine to be one of the more universal biological substances that serves many functions in the animal kingdom. Aside from its well-established role in bile acid conjugation, taurine is considered to play a prominent role in osmoregulation, thermoregulation, neuromodulation and regulation of cardiovascular function, among others. Since taurine is implicated to have many diverse effects in many different tissues, the discovery of a primary mechanism of action that can potentially unify the role of taurine in biology has been a long time goal of many investigators. It is hoped that future studies will lead to the realization of this ambition sooner than later.

In the past several decades, a number of symposia have been conducted on taurine. Thanks to the efforts of Drs. Rink and Golubnitschaja-Labudova, a one-day symposium dedicated to taurine was held in August of 1999 in Bonn, Germany, at the 6th International Congress of Amino Acids. This special issue of *Amino Acids* is, therefore, primarily devoted to articles that were presented during this symposium. The Table of Contents emphasizes the wide range of effects of taurine in a variety of different mammalian tissues. We hope that the information provided in this volume will be of value to the readership and will further our interest and understanding of this unique biological agent.

The guest editors express their gratitude to Dr. Gert Lubec, Editor-in-Chief, for the opportunity to prepare this special issue of *Amino Acids*.

John B. Lombardini
Mahmood S. Mozaffari
Stephen W. Schaffer