PREFACE

This special issue on the **"Effects of Phytochemicals on Drug Metabolising Enzymes and Health"** attempts to cover the mechanisms by which phytochemicals interact with biological systems or affect drug metabolism, and reviews the pharmacological and toxicological consequences of such interactions. This is presently a subject attracting attention because of public interest in alternative medicine (dietary supplements, herbal medicines and natural health products) as a complement to or instead of traditional medicine. Governments are responding by tightening lax rules on these products so as to improve the quality and safety of these products, but much research is still required to determine the latter. The fastest growing segment of the food industry today is the production of "functional foods" or "nutraceuticals", i.e. naturally occurring ingredients (other than nutrients) which can be consumed as part of the daily diet. This initiative has arisen from epidemiological evidence of reduced disease risk by fruit and vegetable consumption. Their roles would be to improve not only our health by preventing the onset of chronic diseases but even to improve our physical or mental performance. The pharmaceutical industry is also interested in the development of synthetic analogues of phytochemicals that prevent and treat disease and improve the quality of life, and in addition is particularly interested in how dietary phytochemicals affect drug metabolism.

It is hoped that this special issue will at least encourage further research into the effects of phytochemicals on health, particularly chemoprevention.

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