

GLYCOPINION

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As the number of biological systems which are known to involve glycosylation expand it is clear that glycobiology is a field set for rapid development during the 1990s. Following DNA and proteins, oligosaccharides constitute the third great biological alphabet to be unravelled. The breadth covered by the inter-related subjects to be discussed at this conference suggests that this alphabet is well on the way to becoming a language!

Glycoconjugates are involved in events which include recognition, signalling, development, neurology, immunology, virology, cancer, host-pathogen interactions, expression of blood group antigens and intercellular sorting and recycling. They are essential molecules in structural and protective tissues and their metabolism is widely studied.

While the pioneers of the field were mainly occupied with defining the structure and sequence of oligosaccharides, recent advances in technology are making this routine. The well equipped laboratory of the future will have machines for releasing and sequencing oligosaccharides alongside the DNA and protein sequencing equipment. These advances will enable researchers to focus on the biological implications of glycosylation in a way that has not previously been possible.

Science is a truly international discipline. It is a privilege for all of us to be guests of the Polish people at an exciting time of change both in their own

history and also within the field of glycoconjugate research. Polish commitment to this field is well illustrated by the fact that a glycobiology workshop will immediately follow this meeting. It will be hosted by Professor Krzysztof Zwierz at the Medical Academy in Bialystok, and sponsored partly by the Polish Biochemical Society and the British Council. The workshop, which includes practical sessions and lectures, is being organized jointly by the glycoconjugate community in Poland, Oxford Glycosystems, and the Glycobiology Institute, Oxford. We hope that this workshop combined with this international meeting will lead to further initiatives to establish new technology in Poland.

The *Glycoconjugate Journal* has made its own pioneering contribution by providing a forum in which specialized papers are published together; it is also pleased to provide the essential book of abstracts which are indispensable to the success of this conference.

All the Editors of the Journal would like to thank the Polish scientists for their generous hospitality in hosting Glyco XII and wish them every success for their future scientific research in this field.

Letters or comments relating to this article would be received with interest by Pauline Rudd, Assistant to the Special Advisory Editor, R. A. Dwek.