

Foreword

This is the first of three issues of the *Glycoconjugate Journal* devoted to lectins. It has its origins in a request I received 2 years ago from Alan Chester, then Chief Editor of the *Journal*, on behalf of the former Editorial Board, to organize such an issue. I gladly accepted the challenge, and after consulting with several colleagues, primarily Roland Schauer, who had gained considerable experience in editing a special issue of the *Journal* on sialic acids, and Halina Lis, my longtime associate and expert on lectins, in September, 1993, I mailed letters to about 125 active researchers in the field, inviting them to submit papers for this special issue. In the letter I emphasized that 'the articles should report original research' and that the submitted papers will undergo the usual refereeing procedure. The deadline for the receipt of manuscripts was 15 April 1994, so that the special issue would appear in the late fall.

The response was overwhelming. Fifty-four manuscripts have been submitted to date, many of them arriving ahead of the deadline. About half of the manuscripts deal with plant lectins, one third with animal lectins and the rest with bacterial and viral ones, and they cover a wide range of topics, such as isolation and characterization, interaction with glycoproteins and glycolipids, three dimensional structure and modelling, biosynthesis, molecular genetics, localization in cells and tissues and biological functions.

They thus provide an appreciation of the rich diversity of lectin research and where it stands now, as well as an insight into the molecular basis of their specificity and how they decode the biological information in glycoconjugates acting as recognition determinants.

The present issue contains 15 of the articles that have passed the stringent review process and have been accepted for publication. The other articles will appear this year in two additional issues of the *Journal* (Nos. 5 and 6 of Vol. 11), which will also contain regular, 'non-lectin' papers. I am grateful to the numerous contributors of the articles, as well as the many referees. My task of editing these issues would have been beyond my ability if not for the generous help I received from Harry Schachter, the new Chief Editor of the *Journal*, with whom I have been in almost daily contact during the last months by letter, fax and E-mail. Special thanks are also due to my colleague Halina Lis for her continued and effective help. Last, but not least, I wish to thank the Publishers, Chapman & Hall, who at the request of the Chief Editor agreed to increase the number of special issues from the originally planned single one to three and to double the number of pages per issue, so that all the lectin articles could appear this year.

Nathan Sharon
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