

Editorial

This special Symposium issue features the invited plenary and keynote lectures presented at the First International Symposium on Drug Analysis, held in Brussels, Belgium, from 7 to 10 June 1983. The highly successful format devised by the Belgian Society of Pharmaceutical Sciences blended a broad scientific programme with ample opportunity for informal discussions, whether in the Gothic Hall of the famous Brussels Town Hall (illustrated in the frontispiece to this issue), or in the magnificent Museum of Ancient Art, whose treasure-filled halls were made available to delegates for a memorable evening, or in some of the excellent restaurants which abound in this historic city. The campus of the Université Libre de Bruxelles provided an attractive and adaptable venue for the diverse activities of the Symposium. The timeliness of the Symposium theme was evidenced by the presence of over 400 delegates from all over the world.

Recognizing the difficulty of generating useful discussion in large auditoria, especially when essentially two working languages were used, the Belgian organizers wisely highlighted the high quality poster sessions, where there was ample time for more relaxed and informative discussions between presenters and delegates. Moreover, a number of extended Discussion Sessions were programmed at the end of the day for those (and there were many) with the intellectual stamina to take in topics ranging from biological sample preparation to new detection trends in HPLC. The Scientific Committee spared no effort in democratizing the process for the selection of discussion topics proposed by delegates, thereby adding a much appreciated vitality to the meeting.

"From Pharmaceutical Preparation to Drug Monitoring" ran the by-line to the Symposium title, and indeed the topics presented ranged from fundamental methods of analysis, through analytical problems of formulation, to the analysis of drugs in biological samples and toxicology. That so broad a canvas could be covered in four days is as much a tribute to the presenters as to the organizers themselves. "Perhaps a little too broad" was a comment to be heard from time to time, but then the delegate could always make a choice and sample some other aspect of the meeting, including the compact, well laid-out commercial exhibition. Rather more difficult was the problem of choosing between equally interesting topics programmed simultaneously in the three parallel streams. This is course a problem which afflicts all the major international symposia, where the pressure of papers submitted as lectures is so high that parallel streams become inevitable. It is interesting to note that most organizers of international symposia are placing a greater emphasis on high quality poster presentations, a trend which has much to commend it for many topics, as was evident at the Brussels symposium.

At a time when for economic reasons delegates are becoming more selective as to the meetings they can attend, the Belgian Society of Pharmaceutical Sciences is to be congratulated on establishing a superbly well-organized meeting. That this should have been the first international symposium on drug analysis is in itself a tribute to the

enterprise of the Belgian organizers, who have for many years run symposia on topical themes in the pharmaceutical sciences. As Editors of this international journal, it is our privilege to have collaborated in bringing together the invited papers presented at this symposium. We speak for many, we are sure, in hoping that the Belgian organizing team continue along the successful path they have established, by organizing a second international symposium on topical aspects of analysis in the pharmaceutical and biomedical sciences.

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