

Editorial

Foreword

This supplement constitutes the sixth *Annals* of the Collège International de Recherche Servier (CIRS) and arises out of a 4-day symposium on *Pain* organized by CIRS in Quebec City, Canada, in September 2009. Since 2001, the proceedings of 5 earlier *Annals*, covering *Stress*, *Aging*, *Depression*, *Sleep*, and *Early Life Development and Health: Impact on Later Life*, have been published successively as *Metabolism* Supplements. All this has been accomplished during CIRS's first 10 years of operation.

The importance of *Pain*—theme of *Annals VI*—is difficult to overemphasize. Eventually, in one form or another, pain can be counted on to threaten or seriously damage the quality of people's lives, although it is also a way of detecting sickness. Pain's severity, frequency of occurrence, and duration may vary widely among individuals; but, during a lifetime, very few escape experiencing some degree of pain. It is simply a question of when the pain will strike, how bad it will be, and how long it will last. Although a great deal has been done by medical science to deal with the problem of pain, very much more remains to be achieved.

Yet, in many ways—some admittedly mundane—we experience considerably less pain today than was the lot of even our parents and grandparents. For instance, in the years preceding World War II, dentistry was a much more painful process than it is now, thanks to our improved local anesthetics and better procedures for their administration. Despite all his wealth and power, Louis XIV (“Le Roi Soleil”) had to have his teeth removed without anesthesia, as well as experience a torn palate along the way. And to add insult to injury, the 19th century empress “Sissi” (Elizabeth of Austria) never smiled because all her teeth had been painfully removed at an early age.

By preventing or effectively treating the illnesses that cause pain, medical scientists have already greatly lessened man's burden of pain. Continued progress in the conquest of pain may be confidently anticipated. However, until such a state of affairs is achieved, our only recourse is to strengthen our arsenal of effective antipain medications and other pain-alleviating modalities. Today, far too many individuals who suffer pain still receive inadequate or inappropriate treatment. More physician education in the art and science of pain therapy is urgently needed.

In the current *Annals*, members of CIRS's Scientific Advisory Committee have provided a series of up-to-date reviews that address new approaches to the “know-how” of pain management, making use of an improved understanding of pain's genetics, the role of stress and corticosteroids in chronic pain conditions, sex differences in pain perception, the role of the spinal glia in chronic pain, and the neurosurgical management of pain, and of various illnesses in which pain is a prominent feature, such as angina pectoris, arthritis, fibromyalgia, and cancer. These articles provide the unique scientific perspectives of CIRS's committee members, together with state-of-the-art information relevant to each of the topics covered.

As President of CIRS, it is my pleasure to acknowledge and warmly thank each of the authors and the 2 editors, Drs Theodore VanItallie and Madhu Kalia, involved in this effort for their excellent contributions.

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