

PREFACE

This special issue of the *Journal of Steroid Biochemistry* contains the papers and discussions presented at the Satellite Symposium on "Hormone Control in Fetal Development" of the *Vth International Congress of Endocrinology*. This symposium was held in Paris from 24 to 26 July 1976.

From the time that hormones were discovered the capital biological role that some of them play before, during and after the conception of the egg was immediately observed. It was also established that the production of some of them increases significantly from the embryo through fetal development.

Subsequent research demonstrated that there are great differences in the enzymatic systems involved in the biosynthesis and transformation of the hormones if one compares the fetal period with extra-uterine life.

After this, many questions were posed: what is the biological function of the hormone in the fetus? What is its mechanism of control? What and how much is the hormonal transfer between the fetal, placental and maternal compartments? How is sex differentiation controlled? What is the role of neuroendocrine hormones?

These are problems which were considered in this symposium and the answers to these questions will greatly advance our knowledge of the physiological and pathological conditions of the fetus.

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Editor