

## Guest editorial

# The Bone and Joint Decade 2000–2010

The successful work with declaring 1990–2000 as the decade of the brain worldwide has led to a raised awareness of the impact of brain disorders and to significant scientific contributions. At a national level, the infrastructure and funding in various fields of brain research have greatly improved.

Musculoskeletal conditions are the most common causes of severe long-term pain and physical disability, affecting hundreds of millions of people across the world. The extent of the problem and its burden on patients and society can be understood from some examples:

- *Joint diseases* account for half of all chronic conditions in persons aged 65 and over.
- *Back pain* is the second leading cause of sick leave
- Fractures related to *osteoporosis* have almost doubled in number in the last decade; it is estimated that 40% of all women over 50 years will suffer from an osteoporotic fracture.
- The *severe injuries* caused by traffic accidents and war produce a tremendous demand for preventive and restorative help. It is anticipated that 25% of health expenditure of developing countries will be spent on trauma related care by the year 2010.
- *Crippling diseases and deformities* continue to deprive children of their normal development.

The impact from bone and joint disorders on society, the healthcare system and on the individual, combined with the awareness that our resources need to be more efficiently used, led to an initiative beginning with an inaugural Consensus Meeting held in Sweden in April in 1998 and culminating in a proposal for the Decade of the Bone and Joint from 2000 to 2010.

The objective of the consensus meeting was to create a document describing the problem, current treatment options and to delineate future perspectives regarding treatment of and research on musculoskeletal disorders and injuries within mainly the following areas:

- joint diseases,
- spinal disorders,
- osteoporosis,
- trauma.

A consensus meeting is equivalent to a scientific hearing with the objective of clarifying the usefulness of current diagnostic and treatment methods with regards to effectiveness and safety in relation to social

and economic effects for the individual and for society. Furthermore, future developments should be addressed. Most of the information was conveyed by the experts in their written and oral presentations. However, in addition medical databases such as Medline and Cochrane were available.

The goals of the Decade, agreed upon at the meeting, are to improve the health-related quality of life for people with musculoskeletal disorders throughout the world by

- raising awareness of the growing burden of musculoskeletal disorders on society,
- empowering patients to participate in decisions on their care,
- promoting cost-effective prevention and treatment,
- advancing understanding of musculoskeletal disorders through research to improve prevention and treatment.

The campaign will promote initiatives in all parts of the world, with particular support for activities in developing countries. There will be collaboration with patients and professional organizations, research bodies and scientific journals. It will be launched at an international forum in 1999, with coordinated announcements made globally.

A series of consensus documents were prepared by selected nonexpert groups, based on papers by experts in each of four chosen topics. The agreed and edited versions are published as a supplement with the June issue of *Acta Orthopaedica Scandinavica*. The document was produced according to guidelines and may require further expansion and consideration. It provides useful outlines for the four clinical fields that had been selected, and an indication of the potential for advance in other musculoskeletal conditions. The common features in all four reports were the need for research and advance, the conviction that this would probably be cost-effective in the future, and an awareness of the wide differences in standards and needs throughout the world.

At the end of the two-day meeting, the consensus document was agreed and an administrative structure set up for the next stages leading to the proposed launch. All the organizations joining the campaign will be represented on its Board, and a Steering Group will direct the project, which will not be linked to any other specific organization. Donations will be re-

quested from member organizations and other non-commercial organizations to fund the initial campaign.

**Heinegård, Dick**

*Dept. of Cell and Molecular Biology, Section for Connective Tissue Biology, Lund University  
LUND, Sweden*

**Johnell, Olof**

*Dept. of Orthopaedics, University Hospital Malmö  
MALMÖ, Sweden*

**Lidgren, Lars**

*Dept. of Orthopaedics, University Hospital Lund  
LUND, Sweden*

**Nilsson, Olle**

*Dept. of Orthopaedics, Akademiska sjukhuset  
UPPSALA, Sweden*

**Rydevik, Björn**

*Dept. of Orthopaedics, Sahlgrenska Hospital  
GÖTEBORG, Sweden*

**Wollheim, Frank**

*Dept. of Rheumatology, University Hospital Lund  
LUND, Sweden*

**Åkesson, Kristina**

*Dept. of Orthopaedics, University Hospital Malmö  
MALMÖ, Sweden*