

Editorial introduction

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Viral hepatitis is a major public health problem world-wide. It has been estimated that more than 300 million people are suffering from this infectious disease with a significant morbidity and mortality rate. In the last decade, there have been tremendous progresses in the discoveries, understanding of disease pathogenesis, diagnostic, prevention and the treatment of viral hepatitis and its associated illness.

Just before entering a new millennium, it was thought that it would be worthy to discuss what we have successfully achieved in the past and also to discuss what the problems are in order to improve prevention, diagnostic and treatment of viral hepatitis.

This international symposium on viral hepatitis beyond the millennium (9-11 December 1999, Leuven, Belgium) was organised for national and international colleagues and promised to be successful with outstanding scientific value contributed by experts in viral hepa-

titis from all over the world. We were very pleased to be able to welcome maximal number of participants which we could have accomodated in Leuven.

It was indeed a memorable meeting for every participant and we like to thank again all the speakers and chairmen who had accepted our invitation to contribute their expertises for the symposium.

Although there were more papers presented and discussed in the symposium, unfortunately only 22 papers which were fulfilled the journal publication rules are published in this journal. We think that this publication is still covering a broad range of current issues in viral hepatitis.

Finally, I would like to thank the sponsors and contributors who made this symposium possible.

Last but not least I also like to express my gratitude to everybody who has helped to organise this symposium.