Foreword by Igor Grant, M.D., Director, Center for Medicinal Cannabis Research (CMCR)

The CMCR was established in 2000 as the State of California’s response to a growing body of scientific evidence for therapeutic possibilities of cannabis and local legislative initiatives in favor of compassionate use. The Center’s mission incorporates both its scientific and social underpinnings by funding high quality clinical and preclinical studies intended to ascertain the general medical safety and efficacy of cannabis products, and simultaneously by working closely with federal, state, and academic agencies as a resource for health policy planning.

As of September 2004, the CMCR had issued four calls for proposals throughout the State of California and funded a total of 14 clinical studies of cannabis’ potential use in such conditions as multiple sclerosis, neuropathic pain, and severe pain and nausea related to cancer chemotherapy or cancer itself. In addition, CMCR supports preclinical research in promising therapeutic areas where not enough data exist to justify use in humans at present.

Since the Center began in 2000, it became rapidly apparent that the field of cannabinoid research was expanding dramatically, revealing not only an entirely new signaling system of great biological importance, but also an unsuspected source of therapeutic opportunities. With the aim of looking “beyond the smoke” into the future of cannabis and its components as medicine, in 2002 the CMCR convened the first of the “Future Directions in Cannabinoid Therapeutics” workshops.

This special issue of Neuropharmacology presents papers from the June 27th, 2004 CMCR Workshop “Future Directions in Cannabinoid Therapeutics II: From the Bench to the Clinic.” Our aim was to highlight emerging therapeutic opportunities, with the goal of accelerating the transfer of promising new medicines to the clinic. The unique advantage of the workshop-style meeting is the opportunity for discussion of new ideas and synthesis of work by the leading scientists in the field. In order to capture the spirit of the discussion, comments are summarized in the final article of this issue. Finally, we extend our deepest thanks to Alex Makriyannis, Ph.D., Billy Martin, Ph.D., Raphael Mechoulam, Ph.D., and Daniele Piomelli, Ph.D. who served as our Scientific Planning Committee for the 2004 meeting.

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