T. Kitamoto (Ed.)

**Prions**

Food and Drug Safety
Preface

Prion disease is a lethal degenerative disorder of the central nervous system, infecting humans and animals. The disease has been of scientific interest because protein itself was thought to be an infectious agent. Now prion disease is becoming a social issue as well because of the bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) epidemic and the outbreak of variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (vCJD) in the United Kingdom.

BSE has begun to attack humans by an oral route, through food. But now we must also think about a second line attack of BSE, i.e., infection via transfusions. In addition to transfusions, we must be concerned about the safety of therapeutic drugs and medical practices against BSE.

As editor, I have compiled this book mainly from papers presented at the meeting of the International Symposium of Prion Diseases for Food and Drug Safety, held October 31–November 2, 2004, in Sendai, Japan. Sendai is a city that is historically associated with the prion hypothesis. The International Congress of Virology was held there in 1984. The 1984 meeting was the first time that there was intense discussion about whether the etiologic agents of transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (TSE) are prions or scrapie-associated fibrils (SAF). In this 2004 symposium, invited speakers comprised those at the cutting edge of current prion research who had not taken part in the 1984 arguments. These scientists thus represent the second generation of prion researchers. One of the purposes of this symposium was to spotlight a third generation of prion researchers whose work can continue over the next two decades.

After our very productive meeting, I was saddened to hear that Dr. Elizabeth Williams had suffered an accident. At the symposium, Dr. Williams had made a valuable contribution in her report on chronic wasting disease (CWD). I offer my prayers and best wishes for Dr. Williams and her husband.

In closing, I express my deep appreciation for the support of the Japan Intractable Diseases Research Foundation in the publication of this book.

Tetsuyuki Kitamoto, M.D.
Organization of Symposium

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