

OPENING REMARKS

PIETRO PRATESI

Società Italiana di Scienze Farmaceutiche, Via Giorgio Jan, 18, Milan, Italy

This international Symposium on Medicinal Chemistry, organized by the Società Italiana di Scienze Farmaceutiche, follows 10 years after the first Symposium, organized by the same Society in Florence, and 4 years after the Münster Symposium. All three Symposia have been sponsored by the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry. The international chemical world's interest in Medicinal Chemistry is confirmed by the establishment, in 1970, of the Medicinal Chemistry Section of IUPAC.

Medicinal chemistry has been defined as a basic science of health; and indeed it has many facets, since it uses the theoretical and experimental means of all branches of chemistry, especially organic chemistry, physical chemistry and biological chemistry. For this reason each advance achieved in these branches of chemistry has a marked influence on medicinal chemistry, that is, on the latter's capacity to interpret the mechanism of action of drugs at the molecular level and to express qualitative and quantitative forecasts of the biological activity of substances.

While many useful drugs are still discovered by semiempirical methods, I think it can nonetheless be asserted that recent advances in medicinal chemistry in the theoretical field allow a more rational approach to drug design.

The great successes achieved on the various frontiers of chemistry in the last few years and the increased degree of contact between chemistry and the biological sciences have certainly not been foreign to this result.

It is for these reasons that the Organizers of this Symposium, in order to express the present trends in medicinal chemistry, have selected from among the most advanced topics some vivid examples of mutual cooperation among the basic sciences of medicinal chemistry. They felt that the main function of medicinal chemistry conferences is precisely to stimulate basic research in medicinal chemistry, to extend its frontiers and thus to encourage a better approach to therapeutic problems, in the interest of public health.

The scientific time-table of the Symposium is split into the following topics: (i) Biochemistry of microorganisms as a basis for the rational development of anti-infectious agents, (ii) Synthetic analogues of biochemical messengers, and (iii) Physicochemical properties and biological action.

Both main Lectures and Special Contributions were given. The latter are for the purpose of illustrating particular achievements that have been attained in the fields of research covered by the Symposium. Ample space was devoted to discussion, which was wide-ranging and lively.

The main Lectures and Special Contributions are published separately, the former in this issue of *Pure and Applied Chemistry*, the latter in a supple-

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mentary volume that is being published by Butterworths of London at the same time.

The Organizers thank the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry for sponsoring the Symposium and the Associazione Industrie Chimico Farmaceutiche for having made it possible through generous financial support. The Organizers also wish to thank the scientists who have given their advice in the preparation of the Symposium, the lecturers, and the colleagues who have chaired the single sessions.