FOREWORD

It is a fact of life that the disciplines of greatest current importance are the least well represented in terms of university chairs and departments. Toxicology falls into this category. A consequence is that toxicology is a melting pot for scientists coming from a wide range of more established disciplines including chemistry, physics, statistics, biochemistry, biology, zoology, physiology, pharmacology, molecular biology, pathology, haematology, veterinary medicine, human medicine, the behavioural sciences, etc. Where groups of erudite scientists coming from these many disciplines converge on a problem they can, between them, if they get their act together, achieve great heights and be seen to be on the frontiers of science. However, before they can easily and meaningfully work together, they have to share a common understanding of the current state of the art and of what the general public and regulatory authorities expect of them, and there is a special jargon which they need to master. Unless a would-be toxicologist knows instantly what abbreviations such as QA, NOEL, OECD, GLP and many others mean, he will be at a disadvantage when it comes to understanding what, why, and the way in which toxicological studies are conducted. In this context, the list of frequently used abbreviations (p. xiii) will be much appreciated.

The aim of this book is to help scientists coming from other disciplines into the melting pot of toxicology to acquire as quickly as possible the basic information which everyone needs to have to function efficiently and effectively in the field.

The book is written by experienced senior toxicologists who are currently active in the evaluation of pharmaceutical agents from the viewpoints of both efficacy and safety. The contents of the book constitute an up-to-date crystallisation of their practical knowledge and experience.

For various non-scientific reasons, there is a tendency for studies concerned with the efficacy of a prospective drug, and studies concerned with its safety evaluation, to be regarded separately and to be the responsibility of different teams of people. A further tendency is for safety evaluation to be planned and carried out as an exercise in ticking off a check list of requirements laid down by one or other regulatory authority. Everyone working in the field of toxicology knows that this approach debases science and that research aimed at discovering the mechanisms underlying both efficacy and toxicity is much more important and much more interesting. The authors of the present book know this full well and have both contributed in an important way to the understanding of mechanisms, particularly in the field of H_2-blocking agents.

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