



Editorial

For the first time, *Paraplegia* is publishing an issue entirely devoted to work submitted by the French-speaking community under the direction of the AFIGAP (Association Francophone Internationale des Groupes d'Animation de la Paraplégie). This is a great honour for the members of the AFIGAP. The realisation of this issue would not have been possible without the will of the Editorial Board and that of Dr Paul Dollfus, President of the IMSOP. For this, they have our most heartfelt appreciation.

The AFIGAP was created in 1978 by Dr Marc Maury who remains its lifetime Honorary Secretary. Its objectives are to unite the groups working with patients presenting spinal-cord lesions, promote multicentric studies, contribute to ongoing training of the personnel caring for these patients, and counsel and stimulate therapeutic and social action in conjunction with the administrative and political authorities of the countries concerned. There is an annual scientific meeting organised by the AFIGAP which brings together members from Belgium, Canada, France, Italy, Switzerland and French-speaking African nations. Furthermore, meetings of great scientific value have been held conjointly with the IMSOP over the last few years (Rome, 1988; Gent 1993) or are currently under preparation (Austria, 1997). Once a year in one of the six French-speaking regions a congress is also held especially devoted to training and sensitising personnel working in spinal units.

The contents of this issue reflect the richness and energy of these French-speaking teams. We hope that the reader will appreciate the quality and diversity of these articles that address a wide range of spinal affections. Certain aspects of pathophysiology are

studied; bone metabolism (Wilmet *et al*; Uebelhart *et al*), spontaneous propriospinal activation of sublesional cord segments (Fouillet *et al*), muscular effects induced by electric surface stimulation (Rabishong *et al*). The study of modern walking orthoses (Thoumie *et al*; Gallien *et al*) is the result of multicentric work, which underlines its great interest. Urological problems have not been forgotten; there is a longterm assessment of clean intermittent self-catheterisation by a group of reference (Perrouin Verbé *et al*), as well as the urodynamic effects of Cisapride (Wyndaele *et al*). Paraplegia resulting from decompression accidents is frequent in the countries bordering the Mediterranean, and has not previously been fully considered in the literature in terms of prognosis until now (Tournebise *et al*). The 'locked in' syndrome, an extremely serious consequence of lesions of the brainstem, does not always correspond to the catastrophic prognosis that is commonly expected (Richard *et al*). Therapeutic approaches to sexual dysfunctions resulting from spinal lesions are based upon rigorous examinations (Courtois), but also illustrate the importance, in terms of ethics, of human respect (Maury). Lastly, a longitudinal study of a cohort of patients suffering from spinal lesions confirms the importance of prospective surveys for objective analysis of how the handicap is experienced (Daverat *et al*).

We hope that this special number of the journal will contribute to enriching reflection, and will be followed by other issues of the journal representing diverse languages and cultures.

Professor M Barat MD
President AFIGAP