The papers compiled in this supplement of the *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* constitute summaries of presentations at the first International Symposium on “Advances in Targeted Therapies—TNFα Blockade in Clinical Practice”, which was held in March 1999. As such they represent the state of the art on the biology, mechanisms of action and pathophysiology of TNFα as well as the current knowledge on means and consequences of blocking this important cytokine.

We are grateful to Drs Croford, Feldmann, Klareskog, Lipsky, Maini, Moreland and Weinblatt, the members of the Advisory Board of the Symposium, for their invaluable help towards the success of the conference, the first of a series of similar events planned for the future. We particularly wish to thank all speakers for their excellent presentations, most of which are summarised here in writing, and all participants who have actively contributed to the discussions. Finally, we also wish to thank the sponsors* of this university driven event who have provided unrestricted educational grants that enabled us to invite the leading scientists in the field. Moreover, for the first time a rheumatological audience (and the readers of this supplement) have been able to obtain back to back information on the efficacy and safety of TNFα blocking agents from representatives of the major companies involved with open discussion of issues arising regarding each agent when looked at individually and compared with others. It is also thankfully acknowledged that representatives of both the FDA and EMEA actively participated in this symposium. Finally, based on the presentations and as a consequence of intensive discussions, a Provisional Consensus Statement on the application of TNF blocking agents in rheumatoid arthritis was formulated and we have to thank particularly Dr Furst for his guidance in this respect.

We hope that the readers of this supplement will enjoy the contributions as much as the participants seemed to enjoy the meeting.

F C BREEDVELD

J R KALDEN

J S SMOLEN

*The Conference was organised under the sole responsibility of the Departments of Rheumatology of the Universities of Erlangen, Leiden and Vienna in collaboration with an Advisory Board consisting of the above mentioned colleagues from Departments of Rheumatology of several other US and European Universities. The following companies provided unrestricted educational grants for the organisation of this Conference: Amgen, Centocor, Immunex, Knoll, Schering-Plough, Wyeth-Ayerst. Pharmaceutical industry had no part in the decisions regarding the specific programme and, with the exception of few observers, participants were selected and solely invited by the Organising Committee. Several members of the Advisory Board and the members of the Organising Committee have obtained experience in the use of TNF blocking compounds in the course of their participation in clinical studies on TNF blocking agents (for which the costs were defrayed by industry).