The contents of this issue include several manuscripts of papers presented at a Symposium organized by the International Committee for Contraception Research (ICCR) of the Population Council, as a tribute to C. Wayne Bardin, M.D., Ph.D., who has inspired and led the research and development of new contraceptives in his role of Vice President of the Center of Biomedical Research of the Population Council and as a chairperson of the ICCR from 1978 to 1996. His vision and leadership led to the initiation of comprehensive research in male contraception, a neglected field and an obvious unmet need for couples of reproductive age. He trained a new generation of scientists in the field of Reproductive Endocrinology who have pursued the mission of the Population Council both in the United States and abroad in developed and less developed countries. He has also developed and achieved Food and Drug Administration approval for Paragard®, Norplant® and Jadelle®, major long-acting methods of contraception as well as mifepristone, a unique molecule with several indications in the field of gynecology.

The ICCR, which was created by Dr. Sheldon Segal and then led by Dr. C. Wayne Bardin, has been instrumental in generating new concepts and developing new contraceptive technology. Thanks to the collaboration between the Council research laboratories and the clinical network of the ICCR, the Population Council has been a pioneer in developing long-acting contraceptive methods that are now used by millions of women worldwide such as Norplant®, Jadelle®, Mirena®, Paragard® and Progering®.

In spite of advances in contraception, many couples of reproductive age who would prefer to avoid pregnancy do not use contraception, and millions of unintended pregnancies occur each year resulting either in unplanned birth or, unfortunately, in unsafe abortion with substantial maternal morbidity and mortality. Recent developments of contraceptive technology have contributed to the increased use of contraception worldwide, and more recently, user-controlled methods and methods with additional health benefits are being developed to promote better adherence.

In addition to improving access to existing methods, research and development of new contraceptive methods are required in order to reach one of the Millennium Development Goals to decrease maternal mortality by effective spacing and timing of pregnancies. In addition, finding new methods or improving existing methods could help address the currently unmet contraceptive needs of millions of couples in the world. Despite availability of a number of different contraceptives, individuals and couples should have additional method choices to fit their needs at various times of their reproductive lives.

The following review articles summarize the state of the art aspects of several modern methods of contraception as well as new research concepts in reproductive biology.

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