

## ARE LYMPHATICS DIFFERENT FROM BLOOD VESSELS?

*"Resemblances are the shadows of differences. Different people see different similarities and similar differences."*

--Vladimir Nabokov

### OPENING REMARKS

Nearly a thousand scientists and practitioners gathered in Tokyo-Osaka for the 4th World Congress for Microcirculation in July 26-August 2, 1987, to celebrate the coming of age of this discipline and the recognition of its pervasive importance in health and disease. While study of the blood vasculature and its extension into the tissue microenvironment has advanced explosively in the past several decades, the parallel discipline of lymphology remains in its infancy. Although the chyliiferous vessels were identified shortly after Harvey discovered the blood circulation, progress has been slow. In 1966, the International Society of Lymphology (ISL) was founded to bring the lymphatic system out of longstanding neglect, and in 1968, the Society's journal *Lymphology* began to chronicle lymphologic explorations in its pages. During his recent ISL presidency, John Casley-Smith formulated and disseminated a Lymphatic Manifesto to hundreds of scientific journals worldwide.

The lymphatic system, composed of lymphatic channels, lymphocytes, lymphoid aggregates, and lymph, is a vast communication network distinctively adapted by structure and function to gather and circulate tissue liquid, macromolecules, particles, and cells to and from the blood stream and through the tissues surrounding parenchymal cells and to transmit messages to and among these components. Nowhere has its importance been more clearly envisioned than in the prolific writings of Honorary Congress President Professor Yasuyoshi Nishimaru. In the ISL-sponsored symposium contained in this issue, panel members and poster presenters from the basic and clinical sciences explore the question "Are Lymphatics Different From Blood Vessels?"; if so or not, how, when, and why, and for what purpose?

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