

## *Preface*

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**T**HE FETAL WORKING GROUP WAS GIVEN THE privilege of organising the pre-congress update course ahead of the very successful annual meeting of the AEPC in Istanbul, May, 2012. We were grateful for the opportunity to inform the AEPC membership of the many advances that have occurred in foetal cardiology and cardiovascular medicine during the past decade. Care of the unborn baby is one requiring multidisciplinary collaboration and we were immensely grateful to our colleagues in foetal medicine and cardiac morphology who helped to make this day a great success. The multidisciplinary team includes members with the ability to detect congenital heart disease and extracardiac malformations prenatally as well as those with specialist genetic skills who can provide additional counselling and explain the importance of screening and diagnostic tests to families. The aim of the team is to provide families with a realistic perinatal plan and expectation of longer-term outlooks. I doubt we would have made the advances in foetal cardiology without the help and support of the cardiac

morphologists who are a most valuable part of the foetal medicine team, and in this supplement to *Cardiology in the Young* we include some of their important contributions. Technical advances have enabled us to visualise the heart at ever younger gestational ages, and we are grateful to the ultrasound companies for their support of the annual AEPC meetings. Non-invasive assessment of morphology and function increases our knowledge of the early human foetus and helps us to better understand progression in cases of congenital heart disease as well as normal developmental changes and the importance of differentiating between the two. The potential for a reasonable quality of life is an important issue for families faced with a prenatal diagnosis of congenital heart disease, either in isolation or in combination with extracardiac malformations or aneuploidy. We enjoyed a session where an expert team explored different scenarios, common to us all.

I hope the readers of *Cardiology in the Young* will enjoy this supplement that highlights some of the more important topics in foetal cardiology today.

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