With this issue we enter the seventh year of the appearance of the *European Spine Journal*. The number of articles submitted to the journal has grown steadily and although we would like to add more issues to the presently six per year, for several reasons, but foremost for cost reasons, we will first increase the number of pages per issue. The added space for more articles to be published will never meet the needs we have, therefore the selection process for the submitted articles will become harder, although we would like to publish as many articles as possible to reflect a wide variety of activities in spinal sciences. Through the harder selection process we hopefully will be in a position to further raise the quality of the *Journal*.

I also express my wish and hope that we will all together be able to further strengthen the position of our *Journal* in collaboration with the supporting specialized spine societies and to underline the importance of developing an articulate voice in today's and tomorrow's "European house".

With this issue I would like to take the opportunity to express my sincere thanks to all those who have helped in 1997 to make the *European Spine Journal* grow and become an active part of the spinal science community: the readers and subscribers, the authors of the submitted articles, the reviewers and members of the Editorial Board, who tirelessly contributed to a fair and timely review process, the newly appointed deputy editors, who share a

great deal of the editorial work, the Springer publisher for their firm commitment to make a high quality journal and, last but not least, Mrs. I. Zintel, who runs the Editorial Office with a great dedication and professional sovereignty.

The first issue of 1998 concentrates and focuses on two major topics: scoliosis and disc pathology. The latter is of never-ending actuality and covers a wide range from basic science to interesting spinal aspects.

In times when physicians and surgeons are consistently made responsible for the steady increase of health care costs, it is certainly interesting to see what is the contribution of the medical community to health care costs in a field which is always cited as one of the most expensive ones in medicine, namely low back pain: in fact, direct health care costs are "only" about 12% in a multi-billion business for almost all industrialized countries. The big part of the pie is accounted for by social security and lost production, although these figures, which we usually hear from North America, are subject to wide variety and probably to wrong estimations, as is shown by the author of "Crisis: what crisis?"

I hope you will continue to enjoy reading the *European Spine Journal* in 1998.

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Editor-in-Chief