# SSIBLINGS

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**A Message from the President**
**Harry R. Kissileff, Ph.D.**

I have two objectives for this communication. First, I would like to suggest that SSIBlings be used as a vehicle for communicating major issues and controversies that exist in our filed, by means of brief communications, that would ordinarily not find their way into standard peer-reviewed journals. I have seen these kinds of communications in other fields and have found them to be extremely stimulating.

My second objective is to illustrate the first with two examples to get the ball rolling. I am simply presenting examples in the hopes that others will respond. The first example deals with science in general, while the second is peculiar to ingestive behavior. I think that both types of discussions can be fruitful. Example 1: Many scientists operate on the premise that progress is most fruitful when driven by hypothesis. Indeed a claim could be made that science is only successful when conducted in this way. Both the investigator and the reader benefit from goal directed activity and presentation. Surely funding is normally allocated based on the likelihood of success of a well stated objective. Nevertheless, many unique discoveries have been claimed as a result of intuitive or unstructured research. From your own experience and by citation of specific examples, what is the best way to do research? Is it possible to balance the two, and if so, how and what stages is such a balance achieved?

This issue has been addressed by one of the premier philosophers of science, Thomas Kuhn. In a collection of republished essays one of which is entitled "Logic of Discovery or Psychology of Research?" (in *The Essential Tension*, U. of Chicago Press, 1977), he makes the following points: 1) According to Karl Popper, scientists state hypotheses and then test them. 2) Popper, however, is ambiguous because he fails to distinguish between hypotheses about what to test (best guess hypotheses) and the hypotheses that are tested. In the first category he includes such hypotheses as "obesity of these experimental rats is due to a specified component in their diet." 3) Having put forth the best guess, the scientist attempts to "solve the puzzle" posed by the hypothesis. Kuhn calls this "normal science." 4) However, because the choice of which hypothesis to test is made by the experimenter, if it fails the test only the scientist's ability and not the corpus of current science is impugned.

Kuhn's statements are extremely important because they get at the root of what a Society is about. Only when scientists agree on the principles of their science can it be considered to qualify as science. Science is therefore what scientists agree on. The relation of the individual experimenter to the scientific community at large takes on a much more important role when viewed in this light than when individual scientists are viewed as relatively independent entities. Communication, rather than individual recognition of outstanding achievement, should be our guide.