Preface

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It is a great pleasure to have the honour of prefacing the proceedings of this excellent symposium on Intensive Therapy.

The outstanding advances of modern medicine do not consist only of such discoveries as penicillin, cortisone or the genetic code but include the application of a wide range of practical scientific methods to the problems of the diagnosis and treatment of the injured. Nobody who reads this report can doubt that effective therapy is a disciplined technology based on fundamental physics, chemistry and biology. The human body is a machine differing only in complexity from the machines we make. Increasing knowledge of its structure and function constantly changes our capacity to modify its operation by compensating for the effects of disease and trauma.

This symposium brought together physicians, surgeons, anaesthetists and biochemists from many centres. They contributed and discussed a wealth of information on the management of the intensive care of the electrolyte, respiratory, renal and nutritional problems of patients injured by accident, major surgery, acute infections and myocardial infarction. There is reported much mechanical and electronic ingenuity without which such bold and amazingly successful therapy would be impossible.

It is clear that the work reported by the contributors represents many lives saved and much illness shortened. The message of this symposium is that every effort must be made to ensure that intensive care of this sort is freely available and is not the prerequisite of a few major hospitals. To this end we must devote great educational and organizational effort. In particular we must do all we can to divert resources, which are always limited, from less worthwhile activities to intensive care. This will constitute a high-yield investment in life and health.

Dr Sherwood Jones and his colleagues in the Liverpool Medical School are to be warmly congratulated on making available such a mine of factual information.