Introduction

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THE SIX contributors to this Paediatric Symposium are drawn from six countries—United States, Australia, Belgium, Greece, Argentine and the United Kingdom. Each of their subjects is important in child health and nutrition and each of the authors is an expert in his chosen field. All the articles provide both a review and an account of the author's researches. The comprehensive and careful bibliographies which the authors have compiled give the symposium an especial value.

Dr Timos Valaes of Athens discusses the aetiology of hyperbilirubinaemia in the newborn, especially in relation to red cell enzymopathy and to G-6-PD deficiency in particular. An unspecified icterogenic factor exists in addition to G-6-PD deficiency and the two genes appear to be mutually exclusive.

Dr H. L. Vis of Brussels analyses the protein deficiency disorders. He discusses the much debated distinction between marasmus and pure protein malnutrition (kwashiorkor)—marasmus characterized by retarded growth and modifications in the biochemical structure of the bones, and protein malnutrition by changes in the internal organs, the skin and the hair. The size of the carbohydrate intake in the protein-deficient diet decides whether the undernourished child will eventually develop symptoms of kwashiorkor or marasmus, i.e. whether the liver or the muscles suffer the most from nitrogen catabolism.

Dr R. H. de Lellis of Buenos Aires describes the immunological mechanisms of childhood and the role of the thymus and the lymphocytes. The immunoglobulins are the final product of the immunologically competent cell. He gives the concentration of IgA, IgM and IgG in various clinical states in children and concludes with a very useful account of treatment with γ -globulin.

Dr Donald Barltrop of St Mary's Hospital, London, assesses the hazards of lead intoxication for the foetus and the child, paying particular attention to

the possible sources of lead—atmospheric, radioactive, water and food—other than the well studied ingestion of lead paint. The rapid growth of children, the immaturity of their metabolic mechanisms and their variable dietary patterns may make them particularly vulnerable to the effects of lead poisoning and it is plain that the subject requires continuing study.

Dr R. R. W. Townley of Monash University, Melbourne, discusses the management of chronic or recurrent diarrhoea in childhood. This is a comprehensive and balanced account of present paediatric knowledge in an important field in which knowledge is steadily accumulating. The subject looks less simple than it did a decade ago but a good deal more satisfying. No doubt many other mechanisms remain to be revealed but the advances detailed here have resulted from the application of combined clinical and laboratory researches which have been very rewarding.

The Symposium concludes with a valuable study by Dr D. T. Karzon of Buffalo of the immunization practice in the United States and in England and Wales. Dr Karzon is able to provide useful conclusions for those whose job it is to direct immunoprophylaxis in both countries. Although there are disparate systems of health care in the two countries similar trends have developed, but this correlation of national experience provides the information which will allow the most satisfactory procedures to be rapidly and coincidentally developed. British readers will observe with interest that Dr Karzon is not only the Professor of Pediatrics in the State University of New York, he is also the Professor of Microbiology.

Dr Barltrop is to be congratulated on his planning of this international symposium. It illustrates the rapid advances in paediatric science which are being made in all continents but it also emphasizes the continuing need for wealthier countries to put their scientific resources at the disposal of sick children in those countries in which the demands are urgent.

The Editor is indebted to Dr Donald Barltrop for the organization and preparation of this Symposium