Introduction

PROFESSOR C. ERIC STROUD

B.Sc., F.R.C.P., D.C.H.

Department of Child Health, King's College Hospital Medical School, London, S.E.5

I WISH to welcome you to King's College Hospital and to give you a little of the background of this meeting, as well as a brief account of the way in which our interest in liver disease in childhood has developed here at King's.

Firstly, however, I wish to thank the Institute of Psychiatry for allowing us to use this excellent lecture theatre and also for helping us with the catering arrangements for our large conference. This help, so generously given, is something for which we are extremely grateful, for without the assistance of our friends in this Institute, we would have faced very major difficulties.

We are also grateful to the Hoechst Pharmaceutical Company who have financed nearly the whole of the cost of this meeting and have enabled us to invite participants from America, Norway, and the Continent. Apart from their invaluable financial help, the Company staff have been very active in helping us with the organization. John Wyeth Ltd have also made a contribution which has enabled us to invite some of the research workers from overseas without whom our discussions would certainly have been incomplete.

The interest in liver disease at King's has stemmed from the Liver Research Unit under the Directorship of Dr Roger Williams. Our experience of liver disease in childhood has become a major interest, especially in the last 3 years since Dr Alex Mowat joined our staff as Consultant Paediatrician. More importantly, however, from about the same time we have been fortunate in having the enthusiastic support of all the paediatricians in the South-East Metropolitan Region of England covering a population of over 4 million people. It is very largely the result of this regional co-operation that we have been able to gather together a large series of cases of Neonatal Hepatitis Syndrome and without the

support of the other paediatricians in our region, we could have made very little progress in our research.

In addition, I would wish to thank the Medical Committee of the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, and especially Mr Nixon, Professor Otto Wolff, Professor Alastair Dudgeon and Professor Barbara Clayton, for the way in which they have allowed us to co-operate with them in many of their cases of neonatal liver disease. We were hoping that Professor Clayton would have been with us today to take part in our conference but, unfortunately, family illness has prevented her from doing so, and we all hope that things go well for her.

I think the way in which other research groups and other paediatricians have unstintingly and happily co-operated with us is exemplary. This illustrates how in a relatively rare condition, such as Neonatal Hepatitis Syndrome, in a country such as ours, research is probably only possible by organized co-operation in such a way as to have complete cover of large population groups.

Dr Mowat has been in charge of the liver research programme in our Department and has worked very closely with, indeed, almost integrated with the staff of Dr Roger Williams' Liver Research Unit. We are very grateful for the help and stimulation we have received from Dr Williams. Dr Mowat will tell you of our experience with liver disease in childhood, especially during the past 3 years. I hope this will act as a sound basis from which the rest of the day's discussions will develop.

I must, however, finish by expressing once more my gratitude to the Institute of Psychiatry, Messrs Hoechst Pharmaceuticals, and particularly to the paediatricians of the South-East Metropolitan Region and the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, without whose active help this Conference would not have been possible.