Introduction

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CARDIOLOGISTS have been slow to employ cardiac biopsy in the elucidation of the all too common and lethal disorders of heart muscle (cardiomyopathies). In other disciplines, tissue diagnosis is now a prerequisite and the nephrologist and hepatologist have been greatly aided in the advancement of their subjects by the ready availability of living tissue from the diseased organs. Although techniques of cardiac biopsy have been available for over a decade, biopsy has been undertaken frequently in only a very few centres in the world and little information has come from it to date.

This Workshop was held to examine the extent of information that can possibly be derived from cardiac biopsy. The meeting recorded in the following pages has been subdivided into sessions: the first can be viewed as 'the past', represented by well established clinical and pathological criteria; the second session, 'the present', focuses on the techniques and problems of obtaining fresh tissue. The remainder of the meeting deals with 'the future' and includes contributions and possible information that can be obtained from a diagnostic point of view, as well as elucidating the possible aetiology or

aetiologies of cardiomyopathy, such as viral and biochemical studies. Included also are other approaches, such as experimental work on animals, and on topics of myocardial disease other than cardiomyopathy, such as the influence of alcohol, the distribution of digoxin, and cardiac muscle cell injury.

This Workshop was an attempt to bring together people interested in heart muscle and in the planning of study into cardiomyopathy, employing direct investigation of the diseased tissue. The Workshop included a number of very distinguished scientists in the field of heart muscle structure, function and dysfunction, as well as clinicians who are interested in linking the clinical and functional disorder with aetiological mechanism through the harnessing of biophysicists, biochemists, immunologists and virologists to the problem. We hope that the report of this symposium will whet the appetites of others who will be stimulated to join in the search into the causes of heart muscle disease. We would like to record our thanks to Mrs E. Willman for transcribing the discussions and for her patience in re-typing them.