

## Leading articles

### Editorial

In a period of economic gloom it is a relief to know that there are some areas of growth. The British Society for Antimicrobial Chemotherapy was formed three years ago with 17 members and has in a short period of time now grown to 250 very active participants. We make no apology for the appearance of yet another journal which is a logical extension to this expanding Society. The journal will attempt to assemble in print data from the broad spectrum of disciplines which are involved in the use and development of antibiotics and related agents. The Society contains members whose main interests lie in such disparate subjects as chemistry, pharmacokinetics, pharmacy, bacteriology, virology and clinical pharmacology, as well as physicians, surgeons, obstetricians and paediatricians. Many find within the Society a friendly and lively forum where their mutual interests can be debated. The importance of antibiotic therapy does not need emphasis by me as we all know the way in which these agents have altered the course of medical practice in the past 40 years. The knowledge of the capabilities of antibiotics is still essential to control infections which nowadays are more complex and often occur in patients whose defences are compromised by other forms of medical and surgical treatment.

Research in antimicrobial agents proceeds at an increasing rate. The greater part of the journal will be devoted to reports on different aspects of original research in antimicrobials but it will also contain review articles on developments of particular importance or current interest. Opinion will be expressed through the editorial columns of the journal. Preliminary communications can be expressed either as short articles or in the correspondence columns. These columns we hope will also be used for commenting on the journal contents and for debating data which has been presented here. The journal will try to reflect the wide spread of interests in these drugs, provide stimulating reading to its subscribers and try

to capture some of the enthusiasm and excitement of those working in this field. Many people have provided the support necessary to produce this new venture. Apart from the direct help from the editorial committee and guidance from the editorial board, there has been the greatest co-operation from our publishers. Some, however, deserve special mention—Dr D. T. D. Hughes, Dr J. Hamilton-Miller, Dr R. Wise, Miss E. Wilkinson, Miss J. Fujimoto, Mrs D. Hammond and Miss B. Tucker have all contributed the initial impetus to the journal.

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### Forty years on

It is now nearly 40 years since antibacterial chemotherapy began with the sulphonamides, and 30 since penicillin began largely to supersede them. Since then other therapeutic tasks have been taken over by a succession of further antibiotics and synthetics, and scarcely a single bacterial infection remains for which no remedy exists. Mycoses too are provided for, and even a few virus infections. These miraculous developments have had less effect on the present day pattern of disease than might have been expected. True, the mortality of plague, of various forms of meningitis and above all of bacterial endocarditis has been greatly reduced. So has that of pneumonia in its classical form, but others have emerged. Syphilis is under much improved control, but gonorrhoea, which according to some optimists could originally have been eradicated from entire communities with penicillin, is becoming a therapeutic problem again. Perhaps the concerted attack on tuberculosis by a whole battery of new drugs, divided like an army into first line and reserves, has had the most unqualified success of all. But many non-specific infections, some acute but many more chronic, are much less amenable to the new