Problems in Intrahepatic Cholestasis

Second International Symposium on Intrahepatic Cholestasis
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Problems in
Intrahepatic Cholestasis

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Foreword
International medical symposia serve various purposes. These include the review of information from different countries. They may thus consist of presentations of facts well known to the experienced physician and resemble postgraduate courses, or they may present sophisticated specific information known only to specialists and result a mutual exchange of information and stimulation for further research. Another form, however, is the symposium where the meeting of scientists working on the same questions from different viewpoints may result, in workshop fashion, in development of new concepts and better understanding of a well-defined problem. The Symposium on Intrahepatic Cholestasis recorded here was conceived as belonging into the last type. This explains the repeated assembly of in part the same, and in part different investigators, at variable intervals, to attempt to resolve one of the difficult clinical problems in liver disease, which has not only conceptional and academic but, even more so, diagnostic and therapeutic implications. Therefore, this book contains by necessity a progress report of the state of the art rather than a presentation of definitive information. Clinical medicine has to take its cue quite often from data not fully established, and may thus be based on implications rather than on hard facts. It is hoped that clinicians, as well as basic scientists, may learn from reading these papers. By the same token, the editors are aware of then-obligation to clearly separate hypotheses and implications from established facts. Since shortage of space prevents the recording of the animated discussions of the symposium, the Concluding Remarks attempt to bring some of the information presented in the discussions.

At this point, gratitude should be expressed to those who made this Symposium possible: for sponsorship as well as for the financial support, to the International Menarini Foundation, and to the organizers, who assembled an array of distinguished speakers from all over the world. Thanks are also due to the speakers, who travelled, often from far away, to offer their data, and prepared manuscripts on a tight schedule. The participants, who not only listened to lengthy sessions, but provided thoughtful questions and comments, also deserve recognition, as does the publisher, who made speedy publication possible, which is essential in a rapidly moving field. The reader will decide whether the effort was worthwhile.

The Editors