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In the past 2 years outstanding scientists have been invited to the Department of Gynecology and Obstetrics at the Catholic University of Rome to present the essential steps and results of their recent studies. We have collected the results of these contributions in the second book Achievements in Gynecology 1989-1990. All the articles which appear in the book reflect not only new aspects of gynecology in areas such as socio-anthropology, epidemiology, virology, biochemistry, and immunology, but they also present some specific progress made in the field of gynecology (endoscopic surgery, gonadotropin treatment of polycystic ovarian disease (PCOD), screening for cervix carcinoma, etc.). Thus, I consider these new topics which offer new perspectives and new solutions to clinical problems to be of great importance to the gynecologist.

I would like to specially mention the first paper of the book by Prof. Diczfalusy with whom I collaborated for 5 years (1962-1967) at the Laboratory of Hormone Research at the Karolinska Hospital of Stockholm, Sweden. At that time the main line of scientific interest was the synthesis and release of steroid hormones by the fetus, the placenta and the mother, and their contribution to the formation and distribution of these hormones during the pregnancy. The results of those studies gave consistency to the theory of the feto-placental unit, conceptualized by Diczfalusy and interpreted today as the capacity of the fetus and the mother to communicate through the synthesis and distribution of hormones, with the placenta playing an important intermediate role in this endocrine dialogue. After that exciting 'era' Prof. Diczfalusy was more and more involved in planning and supervising research in scientific institutions around the world on behalf of the World Health Organization.

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The message he gives us now in the paper presented in this book is a
profound and valuable analysis of research objectives that should be developed
in the near future, on the basis of socio-anthropologic, demographic
and biologic transformations that will occur in the world.
In the field of endocrinology and reproductive medicine, the two
papers by Luciano and co-workers and Caruso and colleagues give several
indications of great practical value about the progress of endoscopic techniques
and the methods of treatment for anovulation and for the PCOD,
respectively.
Naftolin presents his results regarding the interaction between steroid
hormones and hypothalamic areas in the sexual differentiation of the
brain. The interesting investigation shows the different effects of estrogens
in neural proliferation, synaptogenesis and postsynaptic membrane organization
in the arcuate nucleus of female and male rats which seem to lead
in the end to two different types of LHRH release, tonic in the male and
cyclic in the female.
Gurpide describes the endometrium both in normal and pathological
conditions as being a very special tissue, highly sensitive to estrogen
influence in its different functional moments.
These two last papers are of mostly basic scientific value and provide a
necessary up-to-date background support for understanding some clinical
features and situations.
The oncology section is mainly devoted to the precursor steps of cervical
carcinoma in the two papers by Aurelian and Sedlis. The two authors
have studied these aspects of gynecological oncology for a long time and it
is of great value to present their point of view on this matter.
The contributions by Michejda and Giuliani and co-workers provide
basic concepts and studies on general oncology, with some possible, future
applications to gynecological cancers.
Natali and co-workers suggest practical diagnostic procedures to identify
ovarian tumors by using monoclonal antibodies.
The papers of the prenatal medicine section include various topics.
The work done by Petraglia and co-workers extends the concept of the
feto-placental unit to the local regulation of placental hormone production.
Weiss, one of the recognized experts on relaxin, presents his latest data
in this field.
The fetal alcoholic syndrome is described by Ginsburg and colleagues,
with special emphasis given to its clinical implications and consequences.

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In the last years, Michejda has accumulated a large experience on the
area of medical and surgical treatment during prenatal life. More specifically,
the paper presented here is addressed to central nervous system defects and their treatment during fetal life. It represents an important contribution to the new field of prenatal medicine supporting intra utero treatment of the fetus.

I would again like to thank all the colleagues who participated at the Rome meetings, enriching our knowledge in the field of obstetrics and gynecology. All their contributions are presented in an easy and pleasant form and are rich in suggestions and ideas for both clinical applications and cultural support to those who wish to maintain an up-to-date knowledge in our growing specialty.

Rome, May 1991 Salvatore Mancuso