

INTRODUCTION

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2000 was another good year for respiratory medicine with interesting advances across a number of fronts being reflected in this year's literature. As in previous years, we have selected a number of papers (introductory articles) across a wide range of topics and have asked an expert in the field to review the introductory article and then to write a review, placing it in the context of that particular subject area and the recent relevant literature, thus providing a general synopsis of the topic. For some topics we have identified more than one paper if they represent closely connected interesting themes. Our authors are invited to be as specific or general as they choose, and also to be controversial if they wish. The abstracts of the relevant introductory articles are given at the beginning of each review, and a list of learning points is also provided. As previously, we have tried to select a balance of subjects across an interesting year for respiratory medicine, and have also tried to avoid areas covered in last year's *Thorax Year in Review*. The idea is that these annual reviews will have a cumulative value in covering a wide spectrum of advances in respiratory medicine as the years go by. This current issue, and back numbers from previous years, should become a useful resource for continuing medical education for both consultants and trainees in respiratory medicine.

This year's selection covers a wide range and includes reviews on respiratory sleep disorders and hypertension, positron emission tomography for staging in non-small cell lung cancer, self-managed oral anticoagulation, vitamin D in tuberculosis, and inhaled steroids in the prevention of asthma deaths. Epidemiological topics include the role of dietary antioxidants in obstructive lung disease, the relation between obesity and asthma, and the relevance of allergen exposure in early life to the development of asthma. The effect of smoking cessation on pulmonary function, the role of inhaled steroids in COPD, and the relation of bronchial hyperresponsiveness to COPD mortality are also reviewed. ITU issues are covered in a review of ventilator strategies for acute respiratory distress syndrome and the management of ventilator associated pneumonia.

We hope that this year's reviews will be an enjoyable and educational read. We are, as always, very grateful to all our contributors who have taken time and trouble to write them.

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