THORAX

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Introduction

An annual supplement reviewing publications in respiratory medicine of the preceding year was the brainchild of the current editor of *Thorax*, Dr Stephen Spiro. Having provided the inspiration, he charged us with making it happen. The task has proved to be less straightforward than we had imagined, but we have been fortunate with our inaugural international panel of contributors, and we have received invaluable support from the journal's technical staff. All we can do now is to hope that the readers of *Thorax* find the supplement to be of interest and to have educational value.

Between us we have tried to identify publications during 1994 which are of particular importance (even seminal), which address issues of topical or practical concern, or which have simply stimulated our interest. Such criteria have provided us with a wide choice, so we have been able to make a selection which involves many aspects of respiratory medicine – from airway disorders to those of the lung parenchyma, from infection to malignancy, from physiology to pharmacology, from mechanisms to management, and from agents in the environment to epidemiology.

The supplement comprises 12 articles, which seems appropriate to a single calendar year. Our contributors were asked to review each 1994 publication and to use its topic as a focus for a more widely ranging educational review. Each article is consequently introduced by the abstract of the respective 1994 publication. The contributors encountered two dilemmas. Was the specific 1994 publication or the broader topic to be the centre of attention, and were they to provide an in-depth state-of-the-art review for experts in the field or a less critical update for the “jobbing clinician”? In practice the balance has depended on the particular introductory publication, the individual topic, and the contributing author(s); but our aims were directed more to the topic and to an educational update. We believe that our contributors have done an excellent job and provided 12 valuable articles for this inaugural supplement. We are greatly indebted to them.

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