

Thorax

Introduction

For the 1996 Year in Review educational supplement of *Thorax* we have followed the format devised last year for the inaugural supplement in this educational series. Between us we have tried to identify publications during 1995 which are of particular importance (even seminal), which address issues of topical or practical concern, or which have simply stimulated our interest. Such criteria provided us with a wide choice last year, and this has proved to be the case again. We therefore hope we have found something for everyone. Every article has much to offer for those anxious to keep up to date with their Continuing Medical Education programmes.

The 1996 supplement, like that for last year, comprises 12 articles. Our contributors were asked to review each chosen publication from 1995 and to use its topic as a focus for a more widely ranging educational review. Each article is consequently introduced by the abstract (or abstracts) of the respective 1995 publication(s). The selected topics range this year from the genetics of asthma, atopy, and cystic fibrosis to the effects of environmental air pollution with small particles and asbestos; from diagnostic advances in lung cancer using positron emission tomography to newer management techniques for pneumothorax (video-assisted thoracoscopy) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (volume reduction surgery and non-invasive ventilation); from the epidemiology of wheezing in young people to that of snoring in older people; and from the evolving problem of drug resistant pneumococci to the neurological causes of difficulty in weaning after prolonged assisted ventilation.

While we have asked some of our contributors to describe and review the salient features of recent technological and scientific advances, others have faced a rather different challenge in reviewing issues without clear answers. These are inevitably enshrouded in controversy, and we hope the Year in Review educational supplement will provide a useful forum to stimulate on-going informed debate. The choice of material for the annual supplement will exert a critical influence on its future success, and we invite readers to submit suggestions for topics, introductory articles, and even reviewers, as the opportunity arises. We seek a global flavour, and your suggestions should be sent via the editorial office of *Thorax*.

We are greatly indebted to our reviewers, who have met our demanding deadlines and have parried our editorial queries with patience and good humour.

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