

INTRODUCTION

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2001 was another exciting year in respiratory medicine with many developments on numerous fronts providing a large literature from which to select this year's papers for review. As in the past, we have selected a number of introductory articles across as broad a range of topics as possible, and have then asked an authority in the area to write a review of the topic, putting the information in the introductory article into context together with other relevant literature. For some of the topics we have identified more than one paper if they exemplify the theme more fully. We have asked our authors to be as specific or general as they like and also to be controversial if they wish. At the beginning of each review the abstract of the introductory article is provided and a list of learning points is given at the end. We have attempted to provide a balance of subjects across the range of respiratory medicine while trying to avoid topics covered in last year's *Thorax Year in Review*. We hope that this will give cumulative value, year on year, and hopefully provide a useful resource for continuing medical education, both for people training in respiratory medicine and established clinicians.

This year's collection of reviews covers a wide range of topics starting with the problems of investigating pulmonary infection in the immunocompromised patient and advances in the management of severe sepsis. The management of acute COPD admissions and the current position on influenza and pneumococcal vaccination are also discussed. Topics related to asthma include dysfunctional breathing, time trends in asthma prevalence, and the role of probiotics in atopic disease. Surgical aspects are reflected in reviews of lung volume reduction surgery and transplantation. Finally there are commentaries on lung cancer and tobacco politics.

We hope that this year's reviews will be stimulating, enjoyable and educational. As always we are extremely grateful to all our contributors who have taken time and trouble from their busy schedules to write them.

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