PREGNANCY CARE FOR THE 1980s

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**Based on a Conference Held at the
Royal Society of Medicine**

Edited by

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Foreword

by

Sir John Stallworthy

One hundred and eighty years ago some doctors in London became concerned about the growing tendency to form multiple new medical and surgical societies within the city. This fragmentation was the more surprising at a time when scientific knowledge was relatively limited. Among those who reacted adversely to these divisive developments were men of vision who believed that medicine should be based on scientific principles, aided by access to, and use of, excellent libraries and good communications. The practical outcome of their concern was the amalgamation of a number of these groups into a new composite Medical and Chirurgical Society with the nucleus of a splendid library. The Royal Society of Medicine developed from this metropolitan institution with national, and later international, membership and commitments.

The escalation of scientific progress with its many contributions to medicine and surgery revived interest in fragmentation into specialties and sub-specialties with the creation of new colleges, faculties and other institutions. These have brought benefits to many aspects of patient care, but they have also increased those same dangers which worried our predecessors nearly two centuries ago. This medical revolution, for such it certainly is, has taken place while rapidly increasing knowledge, and the application of technological advances to medical and surgical practice have made acceptance of team concepts essential in the development and maintenance of high standards.

As a response to this changing scene, The Royal Society of Medicine has encouraged the creation of multidisciplinary forums designed to explore in depth subjects of importance to the profession and to society as a whole.

It is fitting that this publication should be edited by two such enthusiastic pioneers of the forum concept as Dr Luke Zander and Professor Geoffrey Chamberlain. The establishment of a forum entitled *Maternity Care and the Newborn* which followed directly from the pregnancy care conference owed much to their imaginative and careful planning, and marks a development for which many concerned with the provision of maternity care will, I believe, have cause to be grateful. Readers of this book will similarly be grateful to

them for presenting a splendidly edited record of expert views from many differing disciplines and perspectives concerning an unusually wide range of aspects of pregnancy care.

Preface

A disturbing characteristic of the contemporary medical scene is the steadily increasing fragmentation of the health care services. Owing in part to the inevitable increase in specialisation, contact and collaboration between individuals from different disciplines and specialty groups is becoming ever more difficult.

The developing isolation within which many are now working has important and significant implications to both the planning and delivery of medical care. The reduction in interdisciplinary communication, when important aspects of health care are under consideration, not only reduces the exchange of ideas, but also removes those checks and balances necessary to ensure that decisions taken from one perspective do not have unforeseen and perhaps damaging effects on other components of the overall system of health care.

Pregnancy care is a branch of medicine that has over the recent past become the focus of much debate and controversy in both medical and lay circles. It raises contentious issues concerning the objectives of care, the role of the consumer in decision making and how to ensure that the different professional groups concerned in maternity care can best make their appropriate contribution to overall patient management. Issues of this nature can only be considered satisfactorily in a multidisciplinary context.

The establishment of new Royal Colleges and many Subspecialty Groups have all had a significant effect on inhibiting interdisciplinary exchange, and at various times during the recent past the question has been raised as to the advisability and possibility of establishing an Academy or an Institute of medicine, to bring together individuals from the many branches of the profession.

The view has frequently been expressed that the Royal Society of Medicine, with its multidisciplinary composition, is particularly well suited to serve such a function, if certain changes in its way of working were to be undertaken. At present the clinical activities of the Society are largely derived from its specialty-orientated sections, but an important development which should greatly help it to realise its potential as a stimulus and catalyst for interdisciplinary debate is the prospective establishment of a number of topic-related Forums, each concerned with a different aspect of health care. It is envisaged that these Forums will provide the means by which individuals from

differing disciplines and perspectives will be enabled to come together in a setting independent of any sectarian vested interests to explore new ideas, unrestrained by the official protocol that all too frequently operates within institutions, such as the British Medical Association, the Royal Colleges and the Department of Health and Social Security.

As a preview to the establishment of the Pregnancy Forum, a conference entitled 'Pregnancy Care for the 1980s' was held at the Royal Society of Medicine in 1980. The participants came from many disciplines, which included obstetrics, general practice, paediatrics, midwifery, psychology, sociology and education, as well as representatives of the receivers of care. The aim of the meeting was to enable the participants to share views and ideas on the major and controversial issues concerning the management of pregnancy, rather than it being an occasion for the stating of established positions or the claiming of 'territories'. In producing this book of the proceedings, we have endeavoured to capture the sense of debate and interchange of views by including the essence of the discussions together with the formal papers, as these formed a very significant part of the conference.

The success of the meeting clearly underlined the value of such communication and illustrated the potential benefits to be derived from such gatherings. As conveners of the meeting we are very pleased that the Pregnancy Forum has subsequently been launched and is now firmly established at the Royal Society of Medicine.

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GVPC