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CANCER research may be sub-divided logically into (i) descriptions and definitions of problems by epidemiologists, clinicians and pathologists, (ii) searches for causative mechanisms and for ways of preventing exposure to causative factors, and (iii) attempts to develop more effective methods of treatment and diagnostic procedures which allow for effective treatment of the disease whilst it is still essentially pre-malignant.

This book is the record of an occasion when persons working mainly in the first and third of these branches of cancer research told each other their latest findings — a meeting organized jointly by the American Cancer Society and the National Cancer Institute (Washington) in Denver, Colorado, in the Autumn of 1968.

The subject matter is strongly orientated towards problems of cancer in Man and only 17 of the 167 contributors lack a medical degree.

Past experience suggests that such meetings between clinical

oncologists tend to consist largely of new and sometimes better descriptions of old problems, pious hopes based on limited data and careful measurements of the unfulfilment of hopes expressed at previous meetings.

Scrutiny of the proceedings of the Denver meeting indicates that it was hardly exceptional in this regard.

N. H. Moss and L. M. Axtell writing on the influence of newer methods of diagnosis and treatment of cancers of the gastrointestinal tract conclude: "Since the early 1950's there has been practically no improvement in prognosis for any of the three sites, i.e. stomach, colon and rectum, even among the patients with localized lesions treated surgically."

Brief reviews of basic subjects such as the biology of cancer and of the cancer cell (D. M. Prescott), the present status of studies on the virus aetiology of cancer (F. J. Rauscher), of the bio-chemistry of cell and virus multiplication (J. J. Holland) are pitched at the level of the practising clinician

and are too general to be of much interest to researchers.

However, such comments suggest a much harsher judgment of the book than it deserves. Many problems in clinical cancer research stem from the difficulty that a single observer cannot collect enough experience of any one form of cancer to make pronouncements which reflect basic truths which are helpful to others.

Hence, the exchange of views at such meetings and through their published proceedings spread information of great value to individuals whose unenviable job it is to try to ameliorate the lives of cancer patients by palliative methods.

It is important that members of the medical profession so engaged should accept the need explained by A. Raventos for "systems of collecting comprehensive records of . . . cancer patients in a uniform manner so that they may be pooled and analyzed by modern techniques."

This is the sort of thing this book is mainly about and is indicative of who it is for.