

*The future*

The future in therapeutics is relatively bright although the price of new and effective drugs will probably include unexpected side-effects. A new precision in prescribing will become possible with the advent of biochemical measurement of drugs in the blood. A fixed dose of imipramine may produce a thirty-fold variation in plasma levels in different patients, so the 'slow responders' of today may prove to be the 'fast metabolisers' of tomorrow.

With drugs like steroids, anticoagulants, beta-blockers, mono-amine oxidase inhibitors and cholesterol-lowering agents already being used in general practice, it is clear that at the stroke of a pen a patient's whole metabolism can be fundamentally altered. Indeed the decision as whether or not to start an apparently fit and symptom-free patient on cholesterol-lowering drugs because of persistent elevation of the plasma lipids obviously requires both knowledge and judgment.

Prescribing in general practice is both a privilege and a responsibility.

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## PRESENT STATE AND FUTURE NEEDS OF GENERAL PRACTICE

**T**HE third edition of *Present State and Future Needs of General Practice* is published today and copies are being distributed with this issue of the *Journal*. This is number 16 in the *Reports from General Practice* series which consists of papers written, commissioned, or approved by the College.

Of this series, the previous editions of *Present State and Future Needs of General Practice* have been among the most popular and thousands of copies have been sold. Several now appear on the required reading lists of universities all over the world including the Johns Hopkins University of the United States.

This edition will prove equally popular and Dr John Fry, who has done much of the work, can be congratulated on the result. Not only have many of the important facts and figures been brought up to date but the setting of general practice in society in different countries is considered.

One of the recurring themes throughout this volume is the need for more data and, by identifying some of the key subjects, this edition may promote further research on and in general practice in the future (*see Book reviews*).

### Dr W. A. R. THOMSON

**D**R W. A. R. THOMSON has been editor of *The Practitioner* for nearly 30 years. He has now resigned, and we would like to thank him for all the help he has given the College since its earliest days—ever since the Steering Committee was called together.

His journal published the Steering Committee's report and also the College's first 19 *Annual Reports*, so that these have been available for reference in all the more