

Foreword

Echocardiography 1997

This is the fourth consecutive supplement on echocardiography produced by the British Society of Echocardiography in conjunction with *Heart*, in an attempt to promote the practice of echocardiography. In this supplement we attempt to balance articles relating to ongoing progress in new technological approaches with some important practical applications.

Rovai and Monaghan address the issue of myocardial contrast echocardiography, which within the next couple of years, we feel, will become one of the most important additions to the armamentarium of echocardiographers. Both ultrasound contrast manufacturers and ultrasound equipment manufacturers have been working together towards the development and detection of contrast agents in the myocardium. If myocardial perfusion imaging becomes a reality, then echocardiography will be the single most powerful tool for combining detailed anatomical description with the provision of myocardial perfusion information.

Another technological advance is the slow but steady move towards the development of a fully digital echocardiography laboratory. Most state of the art ultrasound equipment have digital outputs that could be linked to a network. Professor James Thomas, Head of the of Cardiovascular Imaging Department of the Cleveland Clinic, provides an overview of the need for a digital echo laboratory.

Stress echocardiography is becoming routine practice in many echocardiography laboratories. There are at least 10 centres in the UK that perform more than five stress echocardiographic studies each week. The review on stress echocardiography in this supplement is a joint effort from the UK's three most active centres on the subject, providing a useful insight into this technique when used to detect ischaemia and the viability of the myocardium.

The use of echocardiography to look for cardiac sources of systemic embolisation is a topical and clinically important issue. Chambers *et al*'s critical review in this supplement examines the role of echocardiography, which is so often overstated.

An important subject often discussed among echocardiographers is the incidence of back pain, particularly in technicians who may be spending several hours a day

scanning patients. Solanski and colleagues describe the results of a survey on this topic and make a number of useful comments. Solutions, however, are not easy to find and many echocardiographers will not easily change their habits.

There were 16 papers presented at the annual British Society of Echocardiography meeting held in October 1996 in Manchester, and abstracts of these are published in this supplement. As expected, the number of abstracts submitted for presentation has increased annually; however, the rejection rate has also increased so that the total number of presented abstracts has not changed. This is important to maintain a high quality of presentations.

It is our intention to continue publishing this supplement on an annual basis and to use it as a forum to stimulate a critical approach to echocardiography. In cardiology training centres, echocardiography can appear to the trainees as being less important than cardiac catheterisation. It is our view that this is a narrow minded approach to training, particularly as the majority of consultant jobs may not need an interventional cardiologist, but rather a good clinical cardiologist with extensive understanding of the cardiac pathophysiology that echocardiography demonstrates so well. It is our hope that with the new training programmes in cardiology, echocardiography will assume the profile it deserves and will attract a good number of dedicated cardiologists for advanced training (6th year). The days of the cardiologist being skilled in both transoesophageal echocardiography and stenting will be gone (Stephen Brecker, *BSE Newsletter*, February 1997) as in reality, one cannot be skilled in both.

May we take this opportunity to remind you that 9–11 October 1997 is our next BSE meeting to be held at the Marriott Hotel in Cardiff. If you wish to attend, please contact BSE.

Finally, we express our gratitude to Schering AG for sponsoring this year's supplement.

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