

EDITORIAL

FUNDAMENTALS OF BIOCHEMICAL PHARMACOLOGY

THE CONCEPT of the biochemical lesion introduced by Sir Rudolph Peters more than 35 years ago, may be considered as the starting point of modern pharmacology. Initially the application of this concept was developed rather slowly, but around 1950 it began to constitute the basis for drug research. The journal *Biochemical Pharmacology* was founded in 1958 and focused the interest of many laboratories in this field. Indeed some departments were created bearing this title; biochemical pharmacology is now a discipline of its own running in parallel with the more classical, physiologically orientated pharmacology. The time has come to provide a basic text and I have made the attempt in planning and editing such a volume.* In order to be useful and comprehensive, the book clearly must contain information about methods—chemical, as well as histological and physiological—and about general techniques of cell biology. In terms of biochemical pharmacology, drugs cannot be classified and their actions discussed according to the main end effects which dictate their practical usefulness. They must be studied in relation to the changes which they induce in the regulatory and synthetic subcellular mechanisms which maintain the homeostasis of the organism taken as a whole. For instance, in this volume one considers the actions of chemically unrelated substances on the synthesis of nucleic acids and proteins, on lipid utilization on the metabolism of chemical transmitters, etc. . .

Remarkable progress has been made during the last ten years and the mode of action of many drugs is now clearly understood. Few of us would have anticipated this explosive development. The price of this rapid advance is that almost all the material is dispersed in specialized scientific journals and is virtually inaccessible as a whole to any one person whether a young researcher or an old professor! Therefore the *Fundamentals of Biochemical Pharmacology* had to be prepared by many authors, forty-five in fact. My wish was that the book should have a unity of purpose and of presentation and I have tried by careful editing to see that this has been achieved as far as possible.

In the light of current facts it might seem old-fashioned to insist on retaining the term *biochemical* instead of adopting the adjective “*molecular*” which seems to be applied indiscriminately to all fields of study concerned with the sub-cellular level. I insist that Sir Rudolph was right when he coined the term “*biochemical lesion*”; if he had referred to it as a “*molecular lesion*”, he would have lost the potent idea that a single chemical event may affect a complex biochemical system. I would be unhappy to sacrifice the useful and honest word “*biochemical*” because the adjective *molecular* seems to attract the attention of journalists and grant-giving agencies.

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