

Preface

Biomedical research has progressed at an unprecedented speed during the last two decades. This effort has provided such a large volume of information that specialization has become a necessity in order to digest the scientific data and to transform these data into knowledge. One example of this process is lymphology.

Lymphology has been defined as "the science of the lymphatic system comprising lymph, lymph vessels, and lymph nodes."*

Until the early fifties, lymphology had relatively few points of contact with practical clinical medicine, in spite of the very important homeokinetic function of the lymphatic system in the composition of tissue fluid. This was changed by the development of lymphography. This new technique for investigation of the lymphatic system in patients was followed by large series of radiologic studies of lymph vessels and nodes. As a result new light was shed on lymphatic structure and function. The International Society of Lymphology grew out of the scientific curiosity that arose from the introduction of this method in clinical medicine. Progress in clinical immunology including tissue transplantation and the central place of the lymphatic system in the immune system has further strengthened the connection

between lymphology and clinical medicine. The Society has associated members from practically all fields of medicine and from the fields of basic research.

For this anniversary issue, at the end of the first decade of the Lymphology Society, its executive committee agreed to focus on methodological aspects. We interpret this as a healthy sign of the Society, which reflects a forward-looking attitude and recognizes methodological know-how as a basic requirement for further progress in the field.

Recent years have brought so much new basic information that we found it appropriate to begin with reviews of the functional anatomy of the lymphatic system. The articles on methods for exploration of the lymphatic system have been limited to those which can be applied in man since otherwise this tissue would have been much too long.

While the contributors to this issue developed their themes independently and they assume complete responsibility for them, we hope that enough coherence exists among the various articles to make the issue an entity for the reader

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* Editorial, Lymphology Volume I.