

Editorial

WHY CLINICAL PHARMACOLOGY

Its Scope and Importance

No drug can enter the ward without passing through the laboratory. Although essential, animal experiments provide a limited view of the potential danger as well as usefulness of drugs in man. This is because the response to a drug of an animal can be different from that of a man.

Much more can be learned from preclinical trials of a drug in man. Clinical pharmacology is now being recognised as a distinct discipline in medical science which would provide a bridge between basic pharmacology and clinical investigation. It is the science that "deals with the study, the observation, and careful reporting of the physiologic and biochemical effect, under various conditions, of chemical agents on all parts of the human body (1).

It is unfortunate that at a time of "drug explosiveness", when it is most needed, the education in Pharmacology is not receiving its due attention. The formal teaching of therapeutics to senior clinical students is either considered redundant or "taken care of by each individual clinical department" (2). The practice of medicine is getting more, not less, difficult because of the introduction of many powerful drugs almost in a geometric progression. It is high time that a favourable atmosphere is created for the development of clinical pharmacology unit in medical centres in the country. Training in clinical pharmacology is intended to prepare physicians for careers as teachers and investigators in the area of human pharmacology and experimental therapeutics (3). Departments and divisions of clinical pharmacology have already been established in some of the medical centres in U.S.A. and is being established in England and in other countries.

A few foreign fellowships are available in clinical pharmacology, notably Merck, Sharp & Dhome International Fellowship, for training of doctors in this field. Many more grants are needed to assist in the development of a new discipline in a vast country like India and it is hoped that ultimately this would be supported by public and private financial assistance including Government support. By encouraging the establishment of clinical pharmacology unit with the help of well-trained clinical pharmacologists, at least in a few selected medical centres

in our country, we would be able to utilise available funds for specific research projects wisely, intelligently and effectively.

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