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FOREWORD

This supplement of the *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery and Psychiatry* is based on papers presented at a meeting held in Berlin in November 1993 sponsored by The European Charcot Foundation. The symposium "On gammaglobulin treatment in neurology: fundamentals and clinical applications" covered a breadth of basic scientific, immunological and therapeutic topics. Of particular interest were papers on the use of high dose intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIg) in the treatment of a wide range of neurological disorders, including those of the central nervous system, peripheral neuropathies, myasthenia gravis and inflammatory myopathies.

It is clearly important that the role of IVIg treatment is examined critically. Treatment is relatively very safe but expensive. Informal discussion indicates that IVIg accounts for a major part of the drug budget in some Centres. It is undoubtedly effective in some neurological conditions but, even here, it must be compared with other standard therapies in well-conducted controlled trials. Perhaps the clearest role may be in the treatment of acute and monophasic disorders such as acute Guillain-Barré syndrome. Greater difficulty occurs in defining indications for the use of IVIg in chronic disorders such as chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyneuropathy or myasthenia gravis where there is

clinical response but where treatment requires repetition. How often? What is the minimum effective dose? Does treatment alter the long term course of disability?

These papers may not offer definitive answers but it is hoped that they will be of general neurological interest, and will stimulate thought and discussion. Importantly, they may encourage the organisation of, and participation in, controlled trials. Regrettably it has not been possible to publish all papers received. This particularly applies to those describing uncompleted trials and it is hoped that these will be published elsewhere in due course.

I would like to express thanks to Professor Otto Hommes of The Institute of Neurology, Nijmegen. Professor Hommes is Chairman of The European Charcot Foundation and was the leading organiser of the meeting. He has played a major role in the collection and refereeing of papers. I am grateful for the help and encouragement of the Editor of the journal, Professor Richard Hughes. Lastly, I am indebted for the help I have received from Mrs Valerie Crean, Manager, Specialist Journals, BMJ Publishing.

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