

Editorial Comment

"A little learning is a dangerous thing, drink deeply, or taste not from the Pierien spring." — Alexander Pope.

MAN is a curious creature. He has a built-in mechanism that automatically creates dissatisfaction with the status quo and forces him to search onward in fulfillment of his destiny—a truly restless heart. It is this thirst that has sought satisfaction by our banding together for the acquiring and sharing of information in order to develop a more perfect technology and more perfect technologists. This Society, since its inception, has been dedicated singularly to the dissemination of information and has undertaken to effect this goal as completely as possible.

Information concerning the technology is engendered in many areas: research laboratories, specialized patient wards, operating rooms, engineers' drawing boards, factory assembly lines, and more. It originates from many people: engineers, technologists, doctors, administrators, manufacturers, educators, nurses, statisticians, and so on. It is needed by all of these—in fact, needed by the entire medical profession in union with the related engineering and electronic professions, as well as an informed public.

The purpose of the Society, then, is to identify the sources, accumulate the information, and distribute it to all interested individuals—a rather large task, to be sure, but necessary to an alert and well-oriented technology. At the national meeting in 1965, Dr. C. Walton Lillehei cited the fact that medicine has moved farther in the past decade than in the total of all previously recorded history. And, yet, the greatest strides are still in the future in spite of the daily reports of new and exciting accomplishments. This knowledge must be disseminated to all who need it.

There are several ways in which this can be accomplished. One is by local and regional meetings of interested individuals with informed sources from their area. Another is by national meetings in which one can be exposed to distinguished speakers from around the nation. But these can be attended easily by only a relatively few people. An academic society can improve the contacts among the individuals whose profession is related to the technology. It can provide a journal in addition to the meetings. It can develop other media for carrying the information. It can develop programs of basic curricula as well as continuing education.

To do this, obviously, it must have members, must provide the services these members desire, and must maintain a functional organization in order to be able to serve the primary function of the professional exchange of information.

The Future

To examine the past and harvest the present is not indeed terribly difficult, but to accurately envision the future is impossible. Nonetheless, it is necessary to make at least an educated guess in order to prepare for what the future has in store. This foresight can be developed by inter-relating data from several sources: surveys of trends from past to present, surveys of opinion from knowledgeable sources, and a little sensible star-gazing. The resulting picture then can be used as a guide upon which to plan the satisfaction of developing needs.

Some of these needs are already appearing. For instance, how many adequately trained pump-oxygenator technologists are needed to provide sufficient personnel around the clock in a cardiac transplant program? Where one pump-oxygenator team can handle the elective surgery schedule, how many more are needed to provide the service without placing undue stress on any single individual?

Or, what does the future hold for renal dialysis? What interrelationships will occur among programs of chronic hospital and home dialysis, kidney transplantation, and the now-experimental "wearable" portable units? What shifts in the numbers and types of personnel are foreseen? Who must know what to do what?

On the other hand, what educational background is necessary, what levels of intelligence and capacities to shoulder responsibility can be considered minimal? Must practitioners of the technology be doctors, or nurses or degree-holding technologists or specially trained technicians or what?

And what does the technology hold for those from the generation which follows us? Or, better still, because of the speed of modern progress, what does tomorrow hold for those of us who practice the technology today?

Ed Berger