

INTRODUCTION

Few areas in medicine can equal the rapid proliferation of information that has occurred and continues to occur in the area of human reproduction. The progress in our understanding of the underlying mechanisms which control the human female reproductive system has led to an ever-increasing refinement in the definition of pathologic states and the development of specific, effective therapeutic agents for some of these. It is clear that not all is yet known and that there is need for repetitive reassessment of our knowledge in order to keep abreast of these rapid discoveries. Pregnancy, once achieved, is subject to yet another system of hazards about which a great deal has been learned. Both maternal and fetal diseases have become better understood through more refined diagnostic methods. More specific and successful methods of management have been designed. The improvement in the outcome of these high-risk pregnancies can now be demonstrated, but it does require up-to-date knowledge and skills on the part of the physician and a constant effort against the social and economic obstacles which prevent optimal care. With the occurrence of malignant change in the reproductive organs, a new set of hazards is experienced. The admirable degree of international cooperation among gynecologic oncologists with common staging systems and controlled therapeutic studies has led to rapid improvement in cure

rates of most, but not all, gynecologic malignancies. Periodic review of present therapeutic modalities, newer (and generally more conservative) modalities, and the accumulated epidemiologic data is of importance in keeping us oriented. Understanding of gynecologic malignancies has contributed much to our understanding of many similar malignancies.

Not all the changes which are occurring can be reviewed within the scope of this conference. However, we are indeed fortunate to be able to learn the most current information from recognized leaders in their specific field. We are most grateful to our guest lecturers who interrupted their busy and productive lives to come to Richmond to share their knowledge with us and to our MCV faculty for their participation.

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