EDITORIAL

This issue of the journal contains abstracts from a unique and very important event: the first international meeting of specialists in emergency medicine. We must learn from each other’s experiences, but adapt this knowledge to our local needs. I am very pleased to see papers from four continents in this issue, in particular a paper from the developing world. I have recently spent a short time working in India, and Dr Nundy’s comments remind us in the West that the diseases of poverty and deprivation are still the biggest scourge of mankind. In keeping with the feeling of internationalism, I have given my editorial slot to India and Australia. Dr Nundy has recorded his personal views of Indian medicine in relation to the advances being made by Western medicine. The Editorial by Drs Phillips and Baggoley is the first article from Australasia to be published in this Journal. It gives a detailed and informed overview of the subject of pain relief in the emergency department and, in particular, details the scientific foundation all clinical work must be based on.

A. D. REDMOND
Editor

GUEST EDITORIAL

Indian medicine

I was asked recently to address a non-medical audience in Calcutta on the recent important advances in medicine and their implications for India. I wrote to the editors of the three major medical journals: the British Medical Journal, the Lancet and the New England Journal of Medicine, and to the Vice Chancellor of Cambridge University who had taught me medicine. I asked them their views and all gave a list surprisingly similar. Advances in medicine it seems can be grouped under three main headings: prevention, diagnosis and treatment.

When one thinks about prevention, probably the most important story of the century has been the prevention of smallpox. Within 12 years, working as an international community, the world—except for a small area in Somalia—has got rid of a terrible scourge. The World Health Organization has rightly deserved and taken for itself a lot of credit for this. However, smallpox is a disease which is fairly unique in that there is no animal vector. It is very easy for lay persons to diagnose and easy to prevent. Furthermore, in Western countries smallpox had been eliminated long before the World Health Organization was even thought of. The West is now interested in getting rid of all infections. The United States and Scandinavia have widespread immunization against measles, have almost eliminated polio and German measles, and are on their way