Introduction

The problem of assessing thyroid function is of importance to physicians in a wide range of specialities and also to clinical chemists and hospital physicists. This is partly because thyroid abnormalities are among the most common endocrine disorders, and partly because of the need to diagnose and treat thyroid dysfunction before it is causing gross clinical manifestations. Diagnostic techniques are better developed and more widely available than ever before; however, the multiplicity of such procedures is itself confusing, and the relevant information is not easily available for reference. An additional problem for the non-expert is the different normal range quoted by various authors due to the lack of universal standards, to the variety of analytical techniques used, and to the absence of a national quality control system.

The purpose of the proceedings of this workshop is to present, in relatively simple and dogmatic terms, an account of the *in-vitro* and simple *in-vivo* tests which can be applied to investigate thyroid function. It is intended as a practical reference to which the non-specialist may turn for guidance in both the clinical and laboratory aspects of the subject and, details are given of only one variety of each procedure that can be applied to assess a particular aspect of thyroid function. It should be appreciated, however, that many equally good alternatives exist and readers requiring further and more detailed information are referred to the bibliography at the end of each contribution.

The text was produced as a result of a series of informal meetings of a number of experts and is based, in part, on a one-day symposium held at St Bartholomew's Hospital, London, on 10 November 1972; revised manuscripts were received for publication at the end of 1973.

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