

PROCEEDINGS OF THE NUTRITION SOCIETY

The Two Hundred and Thirty-eighth Scientific Meeting (Ninety-fourth Scottish Meeting) was held in the Fulton Buildings, University of Dundee, Dundee, on 6 November 1971.

SYMPOSIUM ON 'NUTRITION AND ENTERIC DISEASE'

Chairman's introduction

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This symposium on 'Nutrition and enteric disease' is, as can be seen from the programme, one of equal interest to those working in both animal and human nutrition. The gut, being the meeting place of the 'milieu externe' and 'milieu interne', displays properties that must satisfy the limitations of both environments. The limitations imposed by the internal environment of the body are, obviously, much more restricted, and thus the gut has the role of limiting entry of those substances which in excess would be incompatible with health. In view of the relatively narrow range of constituents acceptable to the internal environment, when compared with the wide range of substances presented to it across the gut wall, it is surprising how rarely this selection system operated by the gut fails. In fact, enteric failure is seen, not in its allowing inappropriate substances to enter the body, but in its inability to render substances in a form suitable for entry.

The gut is more likely to fail to render food suitable for absorption than it is to allow unabsorbable compounds to enter the metabolic pools. The effect of this, of course, that the threat to survival is less intense. The admission of an undesirable constituent of food is very likely to result in instant and permanent metabolic disarray, whereas the failure to absorb a vital constituent can often be met for some time by drawing on reserves and thus allowing the cause of the failure to be removed or for adaptation of the physiology of the gut to take place.

It is very likely that much malnutrition is due, not so much to an inadequate intake, but to a failure by the gastro-intestinal tract to prepare food in a form suitable for absorption.

In this symposium one will learn more about the causes of this failure and the way they modify nutritional intake.

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