

Foreword

After more than 50 years, transplantation of the kidney has become an accepted routine procedure and patients have survived for more than 40 years even with kidneys taken from cadaver donors. The price of immunosuppression can be high and rejection can occur despite apparent optimal drug dosage. The lack of compliance has caused failure of many grafts, particularly in children. Gradually techniques have been developed and accepted for transplanting other vital organs, such as the heart and the liver and the results of vascularised pancreas grafts are now approximately equivalent to those of the kidney, following the development of new immunosuppressive protocols particularly those avoiding high steroid dosage.

The Editors who have been involved in organ transplantation for many years and have been active pioneers of hand transplantation, have put together a book, somewhat speculative in nature, but nevertheless fulfilling a current need for information. Experts in a variety of different areas have looked at composite grafts, both from the experimental and ethical aspects, and discussed what has been achieved, special difficulties and prospects for the future.

I would regard this volume as timely and fulfilling a useful place in medical literature at an interim stage when we do not have a universally applicable tolerance regimen and therefore the ethics of transplanting non-vital composite grafts will continue to be hotly debated. The editors have managed to gather together experts with sufficient experience and knowledge to

provide a platform from which discussions can take place. There is informed discussion on the suitability, in the context of current medical care, of performing such transplants and also in defining technical and immunological problems. This should lead to appropriate experimental investigations, so that the relevance of these procedures in the clinic are supported by maximum laboratory evidence before patients are subjected to risks that may not be well understood.

The text is of necessity produced by multiple authors but the quality of editing ensures that each chapter can be read as a separate entity or the whole volume studied to determine the state of the art.

Sir Roy Calne FRS

*Emeritus Professor of Surgery
Cambridge University, UK*