Commentary

"It is a characteristic of wisdom not to do desperate things"
Henry David Thoreau (1817–1862).

Only three decades ago any attempt to repair a damaged pathological artery would have been deemed a desperate measure. Yet today, as Mr. Peter Martin tells in our first article, it is possible for the surgeon, with the help of antibiotics, anticoagulants and the skilled application of surgical techniques, to regraft arteries and to repair major arterial catastrophes — and with more than a modicum of success. Such feats are a triumph for the surgeon.

But there are also successes to be obtained from the purely medical point of view with the advent of the newer vasodilators and a truer appreciation of the clinical conditions resulting from diseases of the arterial system. So many early signs of these diseases can be found before the occurrence of any catastrophic condition to which the surgeon is ultimately called. Changes in the normal health and well-being of the nails of the fingers or toes, reactions of the skin colouring to differing postures and an accurate assessment of the patient's subjective feeling all lead to a wider interpretation of the disease process known as atherosclerosis.

Clinical pathology is helping us in a small way to understand the disease a little more, but the real heart of the problem is what is known as ageing. Are there hormones or steroids which play a part in the elasticity of the arteries and of the furring of the intima? If so, which and what? Rejuvenation is having a wonderful lay Press at the moment. Is there any truth in it? There must be some, but can we espy it? At the moment, the answer is obviously in the negative. In our wisdom, let us look carefully, critically and yet sympathetically at the problems posed by so-called rejuvenation therapy. It may pay dividends.