A RATIONALE FOR STUDIES IN THE CONTROL OF EPIDEMIC INFLUENZA

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That a lectureship established to perpetuate the influence of an illustrious anatomist should risk contamination by the nebula of influenza is of itself sufficient evidence that he instilled a spirit of broadmindedness and extension into borderline fields. In the study of infectious diseases the usual emphasis is upon the body fluids, while too little attention is directed to the cellular disturbances. Or too little thought is given to interpretation of those disturbances when they are observed. It becomes increasingly apparent, with the viruses particularly, that typical pathological lesions represent injuries induced because of a preference of the invader for certain physiological conditions or because a cell type possesses attributes which selectively attract the infectious agent. The physiology of infection—its pathogenesis—reveals more and more clearly that the purpose of preventive measures is to prevent that union or to modify its effect. This is well illustrated in the problem of influenza.

The recognition that epidemic influenza is a virus disease has constituted a notable advance, but a clarification of all the problems involved has not been accomplished. In fact, there is still confusion in terminology and a diversity of opinion as to what should be included under the diagnosis of influenza. Some tend to include all unidentified respiratory dis-