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3rd Edition

Juliet Usher-Smith , George Murrell , Harold Ellis , Christopher Huang

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Research in Medicine

Planning a project – writing a thesis

Third Edition

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Planning a project – writing a thesis

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Preface

Looking back on my own scientific work I should say that it shows no great originality but a certain amount of business instinct which leads to the selection of a profitable line. (E. D. Adrian, autobiographical notes [A. L. Hodgkin (1979): *Biographical Memoirs of Fellows of the Royal Society* 25, 1–73.])

Doctors and medical students experience a training directed primarily towards clinical practice. Yet, increasing numbers of the more successful additionally devote time to advancing knowledge, often while working for a research or intercalated Honours degree. Similarly, science students are selected for postgraduate work mainly through university degree results. However, little is said about the qualities one requires for successfully completing a research programme, and the extent to which these differ from what makes a successful doctor or undergraduate student. No doubt one requires originality, creativity or flair, but to attempt to define or expand upon these would be beyond the direct scope of this short book. Additionally, modern medicine encompasses an enormous breadth of subjects, and research is among the most individual of endeavours.

Nevertheless, one can discuss some of the more practical problems associated with pursuing research and working for a

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thesis and a capacity to tackle these fulfils a necessary, even if not a sufficient, condition for a successful research programme. We hope we have commented helpfully upon at least some of these hurdles, even if only briefly in a general way. If we thereby provoke constructive thought, even if not agreement, we shall feel we have achieved our object and have offered assistance to those seeking masterships, doctorates and honours degrees.

We are grateful to Cambridge University Press for encouraging us to write this third edition, particularly in view of the current resurgence of interest in clinical and translational medical research, and in the training and career development of future physician-scientists who will carry this out. These, and other developments that include current alterations in the structure of undergraduate and postgraduate medical education in the UK, are reflected in this current revision of the text. We have additionally taken the opportunity to refine and bring other information given in many of the sections up to date. In this third edition, we remember our indebtedness to Dr Richard Barling of Cambridge University Press, and Professor Richard Adrian of the Physiological Laboratory, University of Cambridge, for their guidance and encouragement in writing the first edition. Finally, we particularly appreciate David Langdon's humorous and sensitive cartoon illustrations of what might otherwise have been rather over-serious material.

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