Introduction

One of the great challenges of modern day science is to keep abreast of the explosion of information in published literature. This has become a herculean task in such areas as cleft lip and palate where information converges from many different disciplines. To help meet that challenge critical reviews such as those in this issue of the Cleft Palate Journal are prepared to survey existing publications, identify areas of missing or ambiguous information and unresolved controversies, suggest needs and directions for future research, and generally summarize the state of the art.

In 1973 a broad, multidisciplinary state of the art review that had been prepared by a committee of the American Speech and Hearing Association was published in the Cleft Palate Journal (Spriestersbach et al, 1973). That review included literature which had been published up to and including 1971 with a few references from 1972. The final report of that committee had four stated purposes:

1. To review in-depth the present status of clinical research on cleft lip and palate and to explore gaps in knowledge.
2. To discuss approaches to filling the research gaps.
3. To identify areas that need no special research emphasis.
4. To recommend specifically those research areas that need development and to stimulate research activity in those areas.

On the basis of the value of the 1973 review, Dr. Vern Lindgren, then President of the American Cleft Palate Association, together with the Council of A.C.P.A., established a State of the Arts Committee. This committee was charged with updating the previous review with special emphasis to be given to publications which appeared between August 1972, and August 1976; to evaluate directions of research needs for future cleft lip and palate investigations; and to discuss approaches that might be fruitful in filling informational voids. The present series of six articles was prepared in response to those charges. As in the previous review, literature which largely reflects opinion rather than data-based conclusions have not been included.

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