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Preface

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MORE AND MORE of us are living to an advanced age, and this remarkable increase in length of life for so many has created a new imperative—the critical need to keep elderly people as healthy and as productive as possible for as long as possible. From a long career of leadership experience in pharmaceutical research and development, I have learned how essential medicines are, not only in adding years to life, but in salvaging the quality of those extra years. At the beginning of the last century, we started to see a dramatic increase in life expectancy, with the result that, at present, 3 months have been added to our life span for every calendar year. New and effective treatments of severe and disabling diseases now make it possible to experience an enhanced enjoyment of life during those additional years.

In most cases it is more cost-effective to treat a disease than not to treat it. This rule applies to the majority of common chronic illnesses. For example, timely and appropriate treatment of common ailments like hypertension or diabetes will prevent many of their late-life complications. Although it is true that the patient and the community will have to bear the cost of treatment with medications from the beginning of the illness, such treatment is a wise investment because of the

invaluable dividends paid in human productivity and longevity.

As will be evident from reading the articles in this supplement on aging, published in the current issue of *Metabolism* and sponsored by the Collège International de Recherche Servier under the direction of Dr M. Derôme-Tremblay, the development of new and effective drugs requires hard and painstaking research undertaken by dedicated and imaginative investigators. Lavoisier, one of France's greatest scientists, described this process more than 2 centuries ago, "Les découvertes sont rares; elles sont le fruit d'un long travail, de pénible méditations; elles ne se commandent pas."

"(Scientific) discoveries are rare; they are the fruit of long hours of work and intense meditation and thought. They cannot be conjured up on command."

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