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Postgraduate Medical Journal publishes original papers on subjects of current clinical importance and welcomes review articles with extensive, up-to-date bibliographies as guides to further reading. Several symposia are published each year, each devoted to a single subject and written by specialists in different disciplines. Most issues include authoritative Current Surveys of clinical problems, and well documented Reports of cases of particular interest, and Book Reviews.

A 'Notice to Contributors' is published on the inside back cover of this issue. The Editor reserves the right to make changes which may clarify or condense papers where this is considered desirable.

The Journal is covered by *Current Contents* and *Biological Abstracts*.

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Books received

- A Colour Atlas of Clinical Parasitology.* By TOMIO YAMAGUCHI. Pp. ix+293, illustrated. Wolfe Medical Publications, London, 1981. £35.00.
- A Colour Atlas of Oral Cancers. The Diagnosis and Classification of Leukoplakias, Orocancerous Conditions and Carcinomas.* By ARNE BURKHARDT and REINHARD MAERKER (Translated from the German by R. E. K. Meuss), Pp. 186, illustrated. Wolfe Medical Publications, London; Year Book Medical Publishers, Chicago, 1981. £24.00.
- A Colour Atlas of Tropical Medicine and Parasitology.* By W. PETERS and H. M. GILES. 2nd edn. Pp. 400, illustrated. Wolfe Medical Publications, London; Year Book Medical Publishers, New York, 1981. £22.00.
- Doctors and Management Skills.* By FRADA ESKIN. Pp. 78. MCB Publications, Bradford, 1981. £6.95.
- Essentials of Geriatric Medicine.* By GEORGE F. ADAMS. 2nd edn. Pp. xi+146. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1981. £4.95.
- Gastroenterology I. Foregut.* Edited by J. H. BARON and F. G. MOODY. Butterworths International Medical Reviews. Pp. 324, illustrated. Butterworths, London, Boston, 1981. £13.50 (subscription price £10.50).
- The Global Eradication of Smallpox. Final Report of the Global Commission for the Certification of Smallpox Eradication.* History of International Public Health, No. 4. Pp. 122, illustrated. World Health Organisation, Geneva, 1980. Sw. fr. 11.00.
- A Guide to Radiological Procedures.* By S. CHAPMAN and R. NAKIELNY. Pp. 250. Baillière Tindall, London, 1981. £6.50.
- Legionnaires' Disease.* Infectious Diseases and Antimicrobial Agents Series, vol. 1. By GARY L. LATTIMER and RICHARD A. ORMSBEE. Pp. vi+250, illustrated. Marcel Dekker, New York, 1981. Sw. fr. 70.00.
- Neurology I. Clinical Neurophysiology.* Butterworths International Medical Reviews. Edited by E. STALBERG and R. R. YOUNG. Pp. 417, illustrated. Butterworths, London, 1981. £13.50 (subscription price £10.50).
- Obstetric and Perinatal Immunology.* Current Topics in Immunology Series, No. 16 (Edited by John Turk). By MAURICE N. CAUCHI. Pp. ix+148, illustrated. Edward Arnold, London, 1981. £12.50.
- Respiratory Protection Principles and Applications.* Edited by B. BALLANTYNE and P. H. SCHWABE. Pp. x+376, illustrated. Chapman and Hall, London, 1981. £20.00.
- Scientific Foundations of Paediatrics* Edited by JOHN A. DAVIS and JOHN DOBBING. 2nd edn. Pp. xvi+1095, illustrated. William Heinemann Medical Books, London, 1981. £75.00.
- The Staphylococci. Proceedings of the Alexander Ogston Centennial Conference.* Edited by ALEXANDER MACDONALD and GEORGE SMITH. Pp. ix+288, illustrated. Aberdeen University Press, Aberdeen, 1981. £20.00.
- Thrombosis. Clinics in Haematology* 10 (2) June 1981. Edited by C. R. M. PRENTICE. Pp. 438, illustrated. W. B. Saunders, London, 1981. £10.75.

Book reviews

The Biochemistry and Pharmacology of Antibacterial Agents

By R. A. D. WILLIAMS and Z. L. KRUK. Pp. 89, illustrated. Croom Helm, London, 1981. £3.95.

This book is a small, short (89 pages) paperback which would be more correctly titled 'The modes of action of antibacterial agents (with notes on pharmacology)'. In the usual manner of books which detail the modes of action of antibiotics the chapters are devoted to particular general types of action, e.g. inhibition of cell wall synthesis, inhibition of nucleic acid synthesis, inhibition of protein synthesis, etc. rather than to particular classes of drugs. Short notes on the pharmacology of individual drugs appear at the end of the chapter in which the drugs were discussed in relation to their modes of action.

The book provides reasonably detailed accounts of the mode of action of antibacterials and would be useful for students requiring a quick and easily understood introduction to this subject. There are areas, however, where it could have been more in line with current thinking. For example, penicillin-binding proteins are not mentioned in relation to the mode of action of β -lactams. Each chapter has a section entitled 'Sensitive bacteria and resistance'. We would have liked to have seen this part of the book enlarged since mode of action and resistance go hand-in-hand and knowledge of mechanisms of resistance would seem just as important as knowledge of modes of action and just as interesting scientifically. There are some unfortunate omissions from the scanty information on mechanisms of resistance given. Nothing is said about resistance to trimethoprim, and the acetyl transferases which inactivate aminoglycosides are not mentioned, although in some parts of the world these are major causes of aminoglycoside resistance. In the context

of bacterial sensitivity and resistance an important error in the book is the incorrect definition of MIC (minimal inhibitory concentration) on p. 20.

The book is weak when pharmacology is being discussed, mainly because the authors' knowledge of antibacterials seems to have stopped short at some ten years ago. No penicillin more recent than ampicillin nor cephalosporin than cephalixin is mentioned, although cephamycins and thienamycins are briefly described. Even then there are patent errors, such as omitting to mention that metabolism is an important mechanism of cephalothin excretion. Anyone reading page 55 might be encouraged to give cephalothin intramuscularly; it is in fact excruciatingly painful. If the pharmacology is weak, then the implied clinical comments are little short of historic. Phosphonomycin (sic) is not a new discovery, and has been in extensive clinical use in Mediterranean countries for at least two years. Trimethoprim is now available as monotherapy, a fact which would have been anticipated by anyone familiar with modern chemotherapy. There are other errors and omissions examples of which are the misspelling of gentamicin, and a failure clearly to indicate which toxic reactions of antibiotics are dose related.

In conclusion, the parts of this book dealing with the modes of action give an adequate although dated account suitable for student reading. Unfortunately, the remainder of this book could positively mislead by reason of its naivety and lack of modernity, and cannot therefore be recommended.

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