fascinating subject in its own right and as the essential basis of much of clinical medicine.

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Clinical Manual of Infectious Diseases, Michael W. Rytel and William J. Mogabgab. Pp. xxi + 524, illustrated. Year Book Medical Publishers, Chicago, 1984. £21.50.

The remarkable expansion in microbiological knowledge, the incredible proliferation of antimicrobial drugs and the troublesome problems of infection in hospitals, especially in the immune-deficient, have resulted in an increased awareness of the importance of infection in medical practice and, of course, in a corresponding proliferation of textbooks in the speciality. Although the market for new books would seem to be saturated the editors of this new American textbook have cleverly managed to find a gap in the current range of specialist books and have admirably fulfilled their avowed intention of creating a manual, which is brief, practical yet comprehensive.

As befits its purpose the manual is concise, well laid out and remarkably up-to-date. The thirty one chapters cover a very wide range of topics, especially applicable to North American practice. Of particular note are the introductory chapters on microbiology and immunity, both of which provide a succinct account of modern developments in these basic sciences. The clinical descriptions are of necessity brief and emphasis has been placed on investigation, management and treatment. Understandably the use of antibiotics reflects North American practice and many of the drugs mentioned may be unfamiliar to British physicians. The insularity of medical practice in different parts of the world is reflected in the chapter on central nervous system infections where it is noted that 'some newer agents (particularly metronidazole for anaerobes) show promise, but clinical experience is too inadequate to recommend their general use'. It is no mean task to edit the contributions from 37 authors and a very fair balance has been struck, though inevitably minor inconsistencies creep in, as for example the conflicting advice in different chapters on the duration of infectivity of tuberculosis after commencement of chemotherapy. There are useful tables in most chapters for quick reference and a comprehensive index for unravelling the complexities of the book.

The manual is directed primarily towards hospital practice and can be recommended wholeheartedly to

specialists of all description. It is less applicable to general practice and too detailed for the undergraduate.

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Annual Review of Public Health. Volume 5, 1984, edited by Lester Breslow, Jonathan E. Fielding and Lester B. Lave. Pp. vi + 473, illustrated. Annual Reviews, Palo Alto, California, 1984. \$27.00 (USA), \$30.00 (elsewhere), Prices include postage and handling.

The 17 contributions in this review cover a number of largely unrelated subjects which range, for example, from an assessment of the effects of social networks and social support on physical health to a technical discussion of the statistical analysis of survival data. Several of the contributions are really only relevant to circumstances in the USA. This is, therefore, very much a book for selective reading. Four contributions deal with relatively new or developing topics. The first is an account of genetic epidemiology. This considers the causes of familial clustering and the difficulties of distinguishing genetic transmission, cultural transmission and common environmental exposure and also deals with the modes of inheritance of genetic susceptibility. The opportunities afforded by developments in molecular biology are covered and the contribution as a whole is amply illustrated by reference to a number of specific conditions, including coronary heart disease, leprosy, birth defects, neurological and behavioural disorders and cancer. The second is a review of mortality and morbidity from injuries in sports and recreation. Surprisingly, considering the very great increase in its popularity over the last decade, there is apparently so far little information on the hazards of jogging, which continues to give rise to anecdotal though none-the-less worrying accounts of sudden death. The third is a discussion somewhat theoretical in nature, of approaches to modifying health behaviour – a neglected topic on which success in preventing coronary heart disease, for example, must largely depend. The fourth, on alcohol control and public health, considers a number of economic and political approaches towards the limitation of alcohol abuse.

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