Book Reviews

Annual Review of Microbiology. Vol. 39, 1985, edited by L. Nicholas Ornston, Albert Balows and Paul Baumann. Pp. xii + 727, illustrated. Annual Reviews, Palo Alto, California, 1985. \$27.00 (USA) \$30.00 (elsewhere). Prices include postage and handling.

Microbiology must represent one of the most diverse of the natural sciences. Its study is important to the understanding of infective diseases of man, cancer and the production of drugs for their treatment. However this represents a small section of the discipline as illustrated in this volume. In the 28 reviews presented, the economic importance of medical and animal disease is shown by the depth of knowledge presented. They also demonstrate the inability of any person to have a broad understanding of all aspects of microbiology.

Although this volume presents most reviews as basic science, those on the mechanisms of bacterial resistance, opportunistic mycobacterial infections and viral taxonomy are written in such a way as to be digestible by a doctor with a general interest in microbial disease. The reviews on the antigenic variation of trypanosomes, oncogenes, environmental influences on the survival of bacteria in infections and *Candida albicans* are basic science reviews written with emphasis on the genetics and biochemistry of their subject. There is little attempt to represent these medical topics from the point of view of clinical medicine.

Other reviews deal with plant and insect pathogens, bacterial physiology, chemistry and genetics for a number of genera and bacterial functions. The importance of bacteria in food, engineering and energy technologies are also reviewed in several chapters.

This volume is aimed at scientists in the field of microbiology who may benefit from being informed on subjects outside their own interest, but the majority of clinical microbiologists and clinicians will not find much to read outside a special interest.

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Cervical Screening: a Practical Guide, Ann McPherson. Pp. i + 48, illustrated. Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, Toronto, 1985. £1.95.

There is a growing public concern regarding the increase in the incidence of cervical neoplasia. Cervical screening is the chief method by which this cancer can be detected and provides the only means of early detection and a chance of a cure.

There exists at many public and medical levels a great vacuum in the understanding of this disease, its incidence, its mode of detection and treatment. The lack of comprehensive information on the subject contributes to the inefficiency, costliness, poor organisation and failures of the present cervical screening programmes. Some questions to be dealt with include: on whom, when and how often should the screening take place; who will provide the screening; how to

reach, inform and bring in the women for screening; how to organise a cervical screening campaign and an efficient recall system; understanding the information, terminologies associated with the disease; finances involved; and treatments available. All this and much more information has been gathered and presented clearly and concisely in this booklet published recently under the auspices of the Royal College of General Practitioners and The Imperial Cancer Research Fund. It should become a standard reference guide for all the medical, paramedical, nursing and reception staff at all centres where women are likely to attend for health reasons. All general practices, family planning clinics, and hospitals should have it on their shelves.

It would be helpful if the first three chapters dealing with the guidelines on cervical screening—the facts and primary prevention—could be available as a pull out supplement for schools and all academic institutions where enlightened teachers could organise these as suitable lectures to the girls who are in need of this timely information.

In the event of reprint it is suggested that the following additions be made—an index at the end of the book; groups at risk to include those women who began sex at or before 17 years of age or whose partners started sex at that time, as there is a growing evidence that early sex is an added risk factor; repeat smears to include inflammatory smears and women one year after they have acquired a new sexual partner. The reference to virginal women should be deleted as there are no documented cases of these women being subject to squamous cell carcinoma of the cervix.

The draft letters to patients are excellent but these should include the specific request for the date, result and name of the centre which took the last smear. If this information is not available then it would be advisable to do a smear for that patient. It would also be useful to include advice on the avoidance of pregnancy, preferably using barrier methods of contraception, pending the evaluation and treatment of the abnormal smear, and advice on how to deal with possible post-treatment complications. The notes for local information should include a list of names, addresses and telephone numbers of hospitals and specialists providing colposcopy services, both local and elsewhere, together with types of treatments available, e.g. laser, diathermy, cryosurgery.

In conclusion, this is an excellent booklet.

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Crisis in Uganda: the Breakdown of Health Services, edited by Cole P. Dodge and Paul D. Wiebe. Pp. xii + 262, illustrated. Pergamon Press, Oxford, New York, Toronto, Sydney, Frankfurt, 1985. \$11.00.

Introduction of westernised medicine to Uganda began in the latter years of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth century and some of the major Christian missionary societies were in large measure responsible; one of the pioneers was Sir