Book Reviews

HOSPITAL INFECTION: CAUSES AND PREVENTION. R. E. O. Williams, R. Blowers, L. P. Garrod, and R. A. Shooter. (Pp. x + 307; 12 figures. 35s.) London: Lloyd-Luke, 1960.

In view of the increasing importance of staphylococcal infections in hospitals, it is not surprising that the accent in this book is on those. Nevertheless, in spite of this preponderance, the general principles of dealing with hospital infection are well exemplified in all their aspects. The book is divided into parts dealing with infections occurring in all types of wards, where, for example, the infectious diseases are separately dealt with, and nursing precautions for all of them are clearly described. Very short passages on such subjects as venereal disease and diphtheria could well have been omitted but help to make the book complete. The best parts are those dealing with the administrative control of hospital infection, which show clearly the duties which would be expected of a control of infectious disease officer, together with the local public health authorities. In fact the book is clearly written with the idea of hospital officers, through their bacteriologists, calling in the public health authorities and the public health laboratory services, who would act as epidemiological officers in tracing infections. This is in fact a little idealistic inasmuch as most hospital bacteriologists could, or should, be able to deal with their local infections with their available resources, using the public health laboratories as reference laboratories. The book is authoritative and up to date on all questions dealing with resistant staphylococcal infections in hospitals. It clearly shows where the difficulties have arisen, and makes great use of the present grave situation as regards staphylococci to suggest better use of the known and well-tried aseptic techniques, which still should have been in use in operating theatres and wards. These chapters trace sources of infection in theatres with wrongly designed ventilation, in wards with irresponsible techniques, and in fact lay down a series of guides to hospital officers for steps which should be taken in outbreaks of single cases or epidemics of staphylococcal infections. It is also clear that the authors do not place much reliance on the paraphernalia that go with the usual type of hospital infection control. The reader, be he pathologist or clinician, can find representative examples of infections or epidemics, and the authors are each quoted throughout the book in their several experiences in ward and theatre infection. In the last chapters there is a wealth of information on technical methods of sterilization; the autoclave is dealt with in a most satisfactory way, but this section would certainly not be understood by the majority of the nurses or porters who have to deal with the instrument, as it is written more for the scientific worker, and underlines the fact that the person in charge of the autoclave has to be knowledgeable about bacteriology and the physics of the instrument. A very short section deals with sterilization by

dry heat, describing the faults of the ordinary hot air oven, and all too brief paragraphs mention the infrared tunnel and the future sterilization by gamma-radiation. The chapter on practical sterilization and disinfection is excellent. This is the sort of chapter which can be read by any nurse who really needs to know how to sterilize individual things like sputum mugs, urinals, or even the skin of surgical attendants! On the whole, therefore, this book can be strongly recommended to all hospital infection committees and their members, who have at this moment to face the troublesome, persistent, and recurring epidemics of staphylococcal infections, and can certainly learn from this book how to deal with outbreaks in their own hospitals.

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RECENT ADVANCES IN CLINICAL PATHOLOGY, Series III. By various authors. General Editor: S. C. Dyke. (Pp. xii + 425; 151 figures. 50s.). London: J. & A. Churchill. 1960.

The publication of this volume was delayed for a number of reasons which the senior editor explains in his preface. In fact nine years have elapsed since the last *Recent Advances in Clinical Pathology* appeared and these years have seen a tremendous development, both qualitative and quantitative, in the subject. In fact, the four main divisions in pathology have shown signs of growing apart in this period, and their practitioners have become more and more specialized. Each year too sees the incorporation into the accepted routine examinations done in a hospital laboratory of many new investigations, which were a short time before regarded as purely research tools. The choice of subjects therefore for a book purporting to be 'recent' must be a difficult decision for the editor. In the past he has felt that discussions of accepted procedures in investigational medicine were all that was required, but in this number it is clear that the aim has been to acquaint and bring up to date the clinical pathologist with the urgent newer techniques which he will be asked to provide by his clinical colleagues. Thus he can learn how to control staphylococcal infections in hospitals, to diagnose toxoplasmosis, and to talk intelligently with the virologist. In the chemical pathology section the aim has been to describe the newer work on four separate metabolic disorders and these chapters are excellent, although the terminology is occasionally very difficult because of the numerous abbreviations which have crept into the nomenclature. A more technical chapter on paper electrophoresis is relieved by an all too brief survey of the clinical applications.

The histopathological section sets a very high standard in photomicrography, of which the photographs of glomeruli obtained by needle biopsy are quite outstanding. There is an excellent description of the technique of this biopsy and no doubt many pathologists will be tempted to attempt such biopsies hoping to obtain as good diagnostic results. The chapter on fungous