Book reviews

Environmental N-Nitroso Compounds: Analysis and Formation. Edited by E. A. Walker, P. Bogorski, and L. Gričič. (Pp. 512; illustrated; Sw. fr. 110; \$45.00.) Geneva: WHO. 1975.

IARC has held biennial working conferences on the analysis and formation of N-nitroso compounds since 1969. The most recent publication in the series presents a large group of original papers collected into four sections. The first covers methods of analysis of volatile and non-volatile compounds; the latter continue to present extremely difficult analytical problems. The second section is concerned with formation of N-nitroso compounds, discussing nitrosation reactions *in vitro* and *in vivo* and their catalysis and inhibition. Certain drugs may be an unsuspected source of secondary and tertiary amines which can be converted into nitrosamines. The third section deals with the sources and distribution of N-nitroso compounds in materials such as tobacco smoke, meat products, fish and air and water. The levels recorded continue to fall into the $\mu\text{g/kg}$ range and are difficult to appraise in terms of potential carcinogenic hazard. The last section contains miscellaneous contributions on general toxicology and carcinogenesis. There are useful concluding summaries and recommendations for future work. The book appears to be well edited but, like its predecessors in the series of IARC scientific publications, it would be easier to use if it contained an index.

R. CARTER

Clinical Chemistry. Principles and Procedures. 4th edition. By Joseph S. Annino and Roger W. Giese. (Pp. xvii + 412; illustrated; £9.90.) Boston: Little, Brown. 1976.

The major part of this book, now in its fourth edition, consists of detailed instructions on specific methods of analysis. It begins, however, with some elementary chemistry which new technicians have so often forgotten, and this is followed by an account of quality control and of the principles of instrumental methods of analysis and methods of separation. This first section is elementary but is notable for its sound, practical advice, eg, how to

avoid the potential errors of semi-automatic pipettes which are so often thought, quite wrongly, to have removed the need for care in pipetting.

In the section devoted to methods, only one method is described in detail for each substance. These are clearly written and contain useful practical points. In general, they are well established methods and each one is preceded by a succinct but very informative discussion of the more important of the modern alternatives. Brief comments on the clinical significance of the results conclude each chapter.

The book is well produced and the text is very readable and abounds with useful practical tips. There are references in each chapter which appear to have been selected with care, and, in addition, there is an annotated bibliography of other books at the end. This book will undoubtedly be very useful to newcomers to clinical chemistry but also contains much for the more experienced worker. It does not use SI units but this is a relatively minor disadvantage.

At \$15.00 it could prove a good investment.

G. WALTERS

Basic Pathology. 2nd edition. By Stanley L. Robbins and Marcia Angell. (Pp. xii + 705; illustrated; £14.75.) Philadelphia, London, Toronto: W. B. Saunders. 1976.

This new edition of Robbins and Angell is remarkably similar to the current 10th edition of *Muir's Textbook of Pathology*, the British standard by which textbooks for undergraduates and junior trainees may be judged. Both have a first part devoted to general pathology with a strong emphasis on pathogenesis, and a second part devoted to systemic pathology with some emphasis on applied clinical aspects.

Since both books are in the same price range and are competing for the same readers it is reasonable to make a direct comparison. In general pathology, Robbins and Angell is relatively strong on congenital and environmental topics and relatively weak on immunology. In systemic pathology, the nervous system does not quite measure up to the standard in Muir, and the omission of skin and eyes is regrettable. On all other topics the contents are nearly indistinguishable.

The greatest difference between the texts is in the narrative style. Robbins and Angell has a smooth uniformity with occasional folksy lapses which at times border on the seditious such as the case made out on page 251 to support reluctant washing by children. Like polar bear liver and tiger cage floors this digression will be recalled by students long after other more pertinent facts have been forgotten.

Robbins and Angell can be warmly recommended in all circumstances in which Muir would be recommended. The decision which to purchase is best left to the taste of the reader.

F. WALKER