Book reviews

Chromatography in Clinical Biochemistry Using Flexible Thin Layers. By R. S. Ersser. (Pp. 24; illustrated. Free on request.) Buckinghamshire: Koch-Light Laboratories Ltd. 1971.

It is difficult to determine the audience to whom this book is directed. The book contains 24 pages, it includes an introductory section and describes techniques of amino acid, phenolic acid and sugar chromatography using flexible thin layers. If the book is directed at small laboratories then they may find the details inadequate. Larger laboratories are probably conversant with the techniques.

Also some workers may disagree with one or two statements in the text. For example, silica gel is not an inconvenient material for sugar chromatography.

T. HARGREAVES

Clinical Immunology By Samuel O. Freedman. (Pp. 10 + 687; illustrated. \$20.00.) New York: Harper & Row. 1971.

Over the last two years immunology has been added to the four classical branches of pathology, and there are now laboratory specialists in this field. There is, however, a serious danger of undue separation between clinical and clinical pathological immunology. Pathology immunologists will make a much greater contribution to patient care if they have clinical interests and detailed clinical knowledge of immunological disease as well as laboratory skills. There is a smaller but definite requirement for physicians with specialized knowledge of immunological disease.

Two major factors block the development of clinical immunology. One is the lack of suitable training courses. This is particularly true in pathology where lack of training facilities has given rise to the erroneous concept that the laboratory skills required in immunology are too diverse to be mastered by one man! A second lack has been the absence of up-to-date textbooks dealing with immunology from the clinical viewpoint. In this context 'Clinical Immunology' is an important book in that it provides descriptions of the clinical features, differential diagnosis, and treatment of diseases of

immunological interest. It is hoped that this will be followed by more books on the same theme which will help to define the role of clinical immunology. The authors are to be congratulated on their pioneer task.

Their treatment of theoretical immunology is brief but adequate. However, the strength of the book lies in its handling of a wide range of diseases and the inclusion of adequate references. As the subject is rapidly advancing this book will presumably be updated in a few years' time and the sections dealing with differential diagnosis and treatment be enlarged. A natural companion book would deal with clinical pathology immunology.

G. L. ASHERSON

Biochemical Consequences of Chronic Renal Failure By M. R. Wills. (Pp. 218; illustrated. £3.00.) Aylesbury: Harvey Miller & Metcalf Ltd. 1971.

The life span of those who suffer from chronic renal failure has been greatly increased by modern forms of treatment. This in its turn has led to a greatly increased need for the clinician to understand the biochemical disturbances which must be controlled if the patient is not only to survive but also to lead a life which is reasonably free from complications. The latter may affect blood pressure, erythrocytes, bone, acid base and electrolyte balance, and intermediary metabolism of carbohydrate and other foodstuffs.

This book gives a good general account of the biochemical problems involved. Renal function in man is presented against its evolutionary background, and the various theories of the ways in which renal insufficiency produces clinical disorders are well set out. The references are comprehensive and up to date, extending into 1970. Even to the expert nephrologist this book may prove useful for reference purposes, but its main value will be to those postgraduate students who are learning either to look after patients with chronic renal failure or to provide the laboratory investigations necessary for their diagnosis and control of treatment.

The book is on the whole easy to read, but there are occasional obscurities; moreover the author has not been well served by his editors for, although there are not many misprints, the commas appear to have been inserted or withheld with little regard for logic and, in some

cases, for sense. There is scope for considerable editorial improvement in the second edition.

G. K. MCGOWAN

Renal Pharmacology Edited by James W. Fisher. (Pp. xii + 293; illustrated. £6.80.) New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. London: Butterworth Group. 1971.

This book contains the papers presented at a renal pharmacology conference held at Tulane University School of Medicine in New Orleans on 13 January 1970. The topics covered by the individual papers range from renal tubular transport mechanisms and renal erythropoietic factor to the biosynthesis, release, effects, and fate of renal prostaglandins. The papers are basically of a review type with adequate references. However, as the conference was in January, 1970, the references are essentially only up to that date. As with the published proceedings of any conference, the topic implied by the title is not covered comprehensively. In view of this and the availability of other more recent and more comprehensive reviews of the topics covered in this book, it cannot be recommended.

M. R. WILLS

The Cobalamins. A Glaxo Symposium Edited by H. R. V. Arnstein, and R. J. Wrighton. (Pp. x + 208; illustrated. £3.00.) Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. 1971.

This is an account of a symposium on the cobalamins held by Glaxo in September 1970. It is in two sections, the first being mainly concerned with technical methods and the basic mechanisms underlying vitamin B₁₂ absorption. The second part has greater clinical content and includes an excellent account of the cobalamins and cyanide metabolism in neurological diseases by Matthews and Wilson.

This book provides a prompt, accurate, and inexpensive account of this symposium and will be of value to those working in vitamin B₁₂ metabolism. However, since it contains only a small amount of new clinical information, it is probably too specialized to make it a worthwhile purchase for most haematology departments.

M. E. J. BEAULD