Technical method

A simple zone reader for recording antibiotic disc zones

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Antibiotic sensitivity testing of bacteria is commonly carried out by the disc diffusion method. The zone of inhibition of 'test' bacterial growth is measured and compared with the zone sizes for 'control' organisms. These zone sizes are usually measured with calipers, dividers or a millimetre rule, and are expressed as the zone diameter or zone 'radius', the latter being the distance from the edge of the antibiotic disc to the edge of bacterial growth.

A simple zone reader has been developed for use with either the Mastring (Mast Ltd) or the Multodisk (Oxoid Ltd) systems, in which six or eight antibiotics are incorporated in a paper cut-out (see

figs 1 and 2). The zone reader can be readily and rapidly constructed and may be duplicated by photocopying. The Mastring or Multodisk on the agar plate is aligned above the zone reader which is placed beneath the petri dish, and the zone 'radius' is read for each antibiotic. The zone reader is easily visible through lysed-blood agar.

The average zone sizes produced by the control organisms (*Staphylococcus aureus* NCTC 6571, *Escherichia coli* NCTC 10418) set up daily can be marked on a zone reader and photocopies made for use in the laboratory. Thus zone sizes of 'test' organisms can immediately be compared with those for the controls.

The zone reader has been used routinely by technicians with success, facilitating the recording of zone sizes without loss of accuracy.

We wish to thank Dr J. G. P. Hutchison and Professor Ian Phillips for encouragement and helpful criticism.

Addendum

Two new products POLYDISC (Scientific Hospital Supplies Ltd) and MASTRING-S are now available and are suitable for use with a zone reader.

Fig 1 Zone reader for use with the Mastring (Mast Ltd) antibiotic disc (natural size).

Fig 2 overleaf

Fig 2 Zone reader for use with the Multodisk (Oxoid Ltd) antibiotic disc (natural size).

Book reviews

Neuropathology and Applied Neurobiology, Volume I, Number 1, January 1975. Journal of the British Neuropathological Society. Edited by J. B. Cavanagh. (Pp. vi + 110; illustrated. Published quarterly. Annual subscription: £14.00; £4.00 single issue.) Oxford: Blackwell Scientific Publications.

A new baby is always a fascinating phenomenon. How will it fare and what will it become as it ages? *Neuropathology and Applied Neurobiology* is the offspring of an active, energetic, and still rapidly developing parent just about to celebrate a 25th birthday, the British Neuropathological Society. The infant shows no signs of disease. The layout is clear, the design is good, the paper of high quality, and the illustrations excellent. Abstracts of the communications made at each meeting of the British Neuropathological Society are given, and there is a section devoted to book reviews. It is much to be hoped that

the able editorial board will demand as high a standard for the papers to be accepted in the future as it has achieved in the first number of the first British journal to be devoted to neuropathology and allied subjects. We look forward to the 25th anniversary of this child, of which so much is expected.

P. M. DANIEL

A Colour Atlas of Forensic Pathology. Wolfe Medical Atlases—12. By G. Austin Gresham. (Pp. 304; illustrated; £7.00.) London: Wolfe Medical Books. 1975.

There seems to be a minor epidemic of gaudily illustrated books on forensic pathology. This one comprises 292 illustrations, and the text is mostly the captions to the illustrations. There is nothing in this volume that should not be familiar to anyone engaged in forensic practice, and colour photographs are poor substitutes for the real thing. It can be argued that no path-

ologist should be engaged in forensic work unless he has had actual first-hand experience in a training situation.

It is difficult in this particular case to know exactly at whom the book is aimed. The illustrations include, for example, a picture of a frozen section of pulmonary fat embolism and the marks on the neck of a strangled woman.

A worrying slight implication of this publication is that the examination of the death of major forensic importance can be undertaken by a general pathologist with only a superficial acquaintance with the discipline of forensic pathology and the atlas in his left hand.

A. C. HUNTER

Iron in Biochemistry and Medicine. Edited by A. Jacobs and M. Worwood. (Pp. xiv + 769; illustrated. £15.20.) London and New York: Academic Press. 1974.

The publishers announce that this book