a bank holiday when the laboratory autoclaves had not been in use for four days; and once after one of the boilers had been cleaned and refilled with water from the mains.

Although it had been very difficult to pinpoint the reason for the failure of *Staph. aureus* to grow on a regular basis on Isosensitest agar, circumstantial evidence supports the fact that inhibitory substances in the direct steam supply to the laboratory autoclaves were capable of contaminating culture media to such a degree that a common pathogen was inhibited, thus causing great uncertainty, wasted time, and the loss of large batches of media.

R. HUMAN

Microbiology Department,
Plymouth General Hospital,
Greenbank,
Plymouth PL4 8QQ

Book reviews

Clofibrate and Related Analogs. A Comprehensive Review. Medicinal Research Series, Volume 7. By Donald Witiak, Howard Newman, and Dennis Feller. (Pp. ix + 287; SFr.90.) New York and Basel: Marcel Dekker. 1977.

The main value of this book will be to biochemists interested in the mechanisms of action and metabolic effects of clofibrate and related compounds. It is especially useful as a reference volume, containing well over 700 references. The sections on clinical trials and practical uses are on the brief side but give a generally well-balanced summary. Side effects are mostly mentioned, though in less than two pages; an important omission is the increased occurrence of various circulatory side effects (other than myocardial infarction) associated with clofibrate in the Coronary Drug Project. This review was intentionally deferred until the results of the co-operative primary prevention trial were available (*British Heart Journal*, 1978, 40, 1069-418). This showed a 25% reduction of non-fatal infarction in those on clofibrate; there was, however, no effect on fatal coronary disease. There was also a higher mortality from alimentary disorders, including cancers as well as gall-bladder disease, in those on clofibrate. Overall, therefore, the practical use of clofibrate in a preventive setting is of doubtful value. The mechanism discussed in the book will assist those interested in the biochemical explanation of this difficult cost-benefit equation.

T. W. MEADE

Primary Liver Tumours. Proceedings of the 25th Falk Symposium, Titisee, West Germany, October 3-5 1977. Edited by H. Remmer, H. M. Bolt, P. Banmasch, and H. Popper. (Pp. xvi + 511; illustrated; £15.95.) Lancaster: MTP Press. 1978.

The Falk Foundation Symposia have become a major vehicle for the dissemination of information about research, diagnosis, and therapy in liver diseases. They also provide an easy access to the important German literature, particularly on carcinogenesis. This volume assembles papers by some 50 contributors, which cover all that is new in the epidemiology, pathology, recently recognised aetio-

logical factors, metabolism of carcinogens, pathogenesis, and virology of primary liver tumours. This mass of information is organised into sections which overlap sometimes a little confusingly, but the reader's attention is firmly directed to points of importance by Popper's masterly Introduction and Summary and by the Discussions that are recorded at the end of each section.

Primary liver tumours had once been considered to be of interest mainly to experimentalists and to those living in the tropics. Their incidence, however, is now increasing in western countries. In addition, specific types of liver neoplasia have appeared, such as angiosarcomas in vinyl chloride workers, adenomas in young women on oral contraceptive steroids, and carcinomas in patients on anabolic/androgenic steroids that are of practical interest to clinicians and pathologists alike. The possible role of the hepatitis B virus in the causation of liver tumours is reviewed and left sub judice.

Research on tumours of the liver provides fascinating insights into the genesis, manifestations, and progress of the neoplastic process in general. This volume updates our knowledge in this and many other respects and, due to its speedy publication, it is remarkably up to date. Anyone with an interest in liver diseases and tumours in general should benefit from it.

P. P. ANTHONY

Quality Control in Laboratory Medicine. Edited by J. B. Henry and J. L. Giegel. (Pp. xii + 237; illustrated; £21.75.) New York, Paris, Barcelona, Milan: Masson Publishing USA. 1977.

This book records the transactions of the First Inter-American Symposium on Quality Control held in Florida on 8-9 April 1976 under the sponsorship of the Dade Division of the American Hospital Supply Corporation. Included are 22 papers given by international experts and the discussion that followed.

The title is misleading for the bulk of the text is concerned with the means of improving the clinical usefulness of laboratory investigation and with standardisation of laboratory methods. There