

malate dehydrogenase in glycerol rather than ammonium sulphate solution. When the ability to overcome an obstacle is at hand there seems little point in continuing to flagellate oneself. The same applied to the presence of apotransaminase in the purified enzyme preparations. This was valid and indeed critical in 1959 (Rosalki and Wilkinson) but is no longer applicable to reputable sources today.

As previously recorded (King, Henderson, and McQueen, 1972), this report contradicts that earlier published by the German Society of Clinical Chemists (1970) and would have been better submitted to the Expert Panel on Enzymes of the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry for consideration during their deliberations on standard methods of assay. As it is we are somewhat apprehensive at this interference by a Government department through one of its advisory group's subgroup's working party in the international discussions and search for agreement by clinical biochemists.

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## Book reviews

**Pathology of Injury: Current Knowledge and Future Development.** The report of a Working Party of the Royal College of Pathologists. Edited by A. C. Hunt and Metcalf, for the Royal College of Pathologists. 1972.

'Pathology of injury' is the report of the Royal College of Pathologists' working party on trauma. Originally announced as 'Pathology of trauma', the title has been changed to avoid confusion with the publication of the same name that has been produced by *this journal* as a supplement for the Royal College. This change is in itself confusing to those of us who cling to the belief that most of pathology represents reaction to injury. Thus we have two paperbacks of similar size and identical price and it is impossible to review 'Pathology of injury' (a blue book) in isolation, as 'Pathology of trauma' (an orange-coloured book) is the report of the symposium on trauma held in 1970. Drs Stoner and Sevvit were editors of this symposium and chairman and secretary of the working party. The blue book has an unadorned text and thick pages that have the irritating tendency to spring shut, like a continental paperback, unless the binding is put under severe strain; the orange book contains twice as much text and is well produced and illustrated in the style of the journal that you are now reading.

Comparisons are bound to be made but these two books are complementary. The blue 'Pathology of injury' divides traumatic injury into 17 chapters, many of which were subjects of the symposium reported in the orange 'Pathology of trauma'. This report reviews the state of knowledge of pathology of trauma, stating the facts concisely and quoting useful references. As a wide and general review, it is an excellent source of information that is not readily available elsewhere. In its terms of reference, the working party was required to assess those areas where knowledge is limited, and it has identified in the text a number of subjects that require research. From the first sentence, which is emotive, the report appears to accept that it is a political document and to appreciate that its recommendations for expanded interest and research into injury will have to compete for financial support and manpower.

Whilst none of us would pretend that the current slaughter on the roads and the accidents to the elderly in their homes are not terrible criticisms of our present society, one remembers that fatalities on the roads have fallen from their peak in 1934; deaths in factories are decreasing and those in the construction industry are steady. In this light trauma is less of a national disease than carcinoma of the bronchus or cardiac infarction.

'Pathology of injury' should not be read by itself, since some of the queries it raises—such as the origin of the lipid in fat embolism—are considered in detail in the orange book. It is difficult to read two books at the same time, but this is essential in order to get the most out of either.

ROGER DRURY

**Public Health Laboratory Service Board Monographs 1 Laboratory Diagnosis of Venereal Disease** By A. E. Wilkinson, C. E. D. Taylor, D. A. McSwiggan, G. C. Turner, J. A. Rycroft, and G. H. Low. (Pp. viii + 42; illustrated); **2 The Use of Chemical Disinfectants in Hospitals** By J. C. Kelsey and Isobel M. Maurer. (Pp. vii + 34; 7 tables); **3 Anaerobic Infections** By A. T. Willison. (Pp. vii + 28; 5 tables.) Price 50p each. London: H.M. Stationery Office (for PHLS). 1972.

The decision of the PHLS Board to publish a series of monographs on methods used in their laboratories will be welcomed by hospital microbiologists in this and other countries. Cyclostyled sheets describing PHLS methods are to be found well thumbed the world over and these publications will prevent them being used long after improvements have been made in the laboratories of their origin.

The first monograph on 'Laboratory diagnosis of venereal disease' is an excellent, clear account of this complicated subject. The technique of the FTA-ABS test and methods of testing the sensitivity of gonococci to penicillin will be particularly welcome.

The second on 'Chemical disinfectants' also covers an area which presents special difficulty. Many hospital bacteriologists are faced with a request to test a disinfectant believed to be superlative or to advise on a disinfectant policy for the hospital. This monograph will doubtless save the laboratory at Colindale many

hours on the telephone answering requests for advice on these problems.

The third monograph on 'Anaerobic infections' is out of line with the others. The information in it can easily be acquired elsewhere. What the diagnostic bacteriologist needs to know is a recommendation for the simplest methods which will enable him to isolate the common anaerobes and an estimate of what he is missing if his technique is inadequate. This monograph gives little help to the bacteriologist who has to decide the significance of isolation of the non-sporing anaerobes which comprise about 95% of anaerobes isolated from clinical material. The aim of the monograph is stated to be to encourage laboratories to use anaerobic methods but the reader is likely to be discouraged by the wealth of methods described and lack of direction as to which he should use when his resources are limited. He may be led to believe, quite erroneously, that the routine isolation of anaerobes is beyond him. Impeccable anaerobic jar technique, good quality blood agar incubated longer than for aerobes, and cooked meat broth with at least 1 in. depth of meat can achieve a great deal and is not beyond the resources of hospital laboratories.

This monograph is suitable as an introduction to the subject by someone starting a special investigation but fails in its original intention.

E. J. STOKES

**Bile Salts in Health and Disease** By K. W. Heaton. (Pp. x + 252; illustrated. £3.50.) Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. 1972.

The development of suitable analytical techniques for the detection and quantification of bile salts has resulted in significant increases in our understanding of their function in health and disease. Dr Heaton's timely monograph summarizes the available information on this subject in an extremely lucid manner so that even a newcomer to the field will, on first reading, be able to comprehend the physico-chemical properties of these detergent-like compounds and appreciate the role of the enterohepatic circulation in the life cycle of bile acids. Dr Heaton shows that bile salts can contribute to disease processes by being either quantitatively deficient or toxic, and then

discusses in greater detail the diseases which bile acids play an important role in. These include disorders of the terminal ileum and bacterial overgrowth in the small intestine as well as cholestasis, cirrhosis, and cholelithiasis.

In this rapidly expanding field, the evidence from the literature is often conflicting and Dr Heaton has reviewed the data in a critical manner. Some of his conclusions may have to be revised in the next edition where more information is available but at the present time there are few reviews which give a more balanced account of the problems.

While it might appear that this book has been written mainly for the clinician with an interest in gastroenterology, there is no doubt that it will become a book of reference for all investigators interested in human bile acid metabolism. It contains 713 up-to-date references as well as some excellent tables summarizing published bile acid kinetics in man. There is also a useful chapter on the methods currently available.

In the final chapter the author draws attention to the fact that diets containing refined carbohydrates have an adverse effect on cholesterol and bile acid metabolism. He concludes that this may be due to lack of fibre in the diet or a direct effect on hepatic metabolism and postulates that it is this aspect of our modern western diet which is responsible for the increased incidence of atherosclerosis and gallstones. It remains to be established whether the therapeutic value of Bran is more important than is currently accepted.

BARBARA H. BILLING

**Australia Antigen and Hepatitis** By B. Blumberg, A. I. Sutnick, W. T. London, and I. Millman (CRC Monoscience Series). (Pp. 74; illustrated. £5.00.) London: Butterworths. 1972. The Chemical Rubber Company (first published: 1971).

This publication forms part of a series of monographs instigated by the Chemical Rubber Company with the aim of providing 'authoritative and comprehensive summaries for single subjects'.

It is of considerable interest as an exposition of the views of the Philadelphia group. They describe their own work, including the original discovery of Australia antigen, and discuss many publications by other workers. The literature review concluded in mid-1971.