

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 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.

The book is clearly written but should be read for its authors' personal outlook rather than as a balanced review. For instance, the use of Australia antigen testing in the prevention of posttransfusion hepatitis is dismissed in a few paragraphs although it is the most important practical use of their discovery.

The delay of two years between writing and publication means that the monograph is already somewhat dated. The authors recognize this problem in their Foreword and a supplementary bibliography has been included. However, this contains only a small number of references and it is almost impossible to make use of the list because it is arranged in almost random fashion.

There is no index, a defect which would be mitigated if the Table of Contents were expanded. The photographic figures have not been reproduced adequately and diagrams would have been much more helpful.

Most active workers in the field will want to own this book, despite its high price, but the general reader would be better advised to consult one of the many recent reviews of the subject.

Y. COSSART

**Quantitative Problems in Biochemistry** 5th ed. By Edwin A. Dawes. (Pp. xiv + 470; illustrated. £2.00.) Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. 1972.

This book has become a classic for many honours students and teachers of biochemistry, and a 5th edition has recently appeared as a paperback at the modest price of £2.00. It provides an admirable account of many aspects of physical biochemistry and includes such topics as molecular weight determinations, acid base relationships, biochemical energetics, equilibria, reaction and enzyme kinetics, manometry, bacterial growth, oxidation reduction potential, and the use of isotopes in biochemistry. The chapter on optical and photometric analysis errs on the elementary side and one might wish that chapters on the techniques and theory of electrophoresis and chromatography had been included. Valuable lists of references and suggested readings, as well as some brief appendices on the graphical solution of problems, symbols, and units, are included. The book is well produced, clearly illustrated, and lucidly written.

As well as being a teaching manual, it can be thoroughly recommended as a reference manual for research biochemists. By working through the illustrated examples in the text as well as answering the questions at the end of each chapter, it is possible to teach oneself an unfamiliar or forgotten quantitative technique.

BARBARA H. BILLING

**Methods and Techniques in Clinical Chemistry** By Paul L. Wolf, Dorothy Williams, Tashiko Tsudaka, and Leticia Acosta. (Pp. xiii + 417; illustrated. £4.80.) Chichester, New York, Sydney, Tokyo, and Mexico City: John Wiley and Sons. 1972.

It is always of interest to read accounts of the technical methods which well known laboratories use in their chemical pathology services. Senior people in most large laboratories will be familiar with most of the techniques, even though the details may vary slightly from method to method. Unfortunately the reasons for the choice of particular methods are not given in any detail and discussion is minimal.

Whilst the book may be of value to those setting up small laboratories it is unlikely to be of value either to scientific staff in large laboratories or those who are working for higher qualifications. There are a number of other books which are available with greater comparative studies of methodology and more discussion, which one would prefer.

M. G. RINSLER

**The Laboratory Aids Series: Antibiotics and Their Laboratory Control** 2nd ed. By M. C. Bryant (Pp. vii + 100; illustrated); **Blood Groups and Techniques** By J. B. Harris (Pp. viii + 71; illustrated); **Diagnostic Procedures in Clinical Bacteriology. The Specimen** By J. D. Jarvis (Pp. viii + 62; illustrated); **Essentials of Microtomy** By S. J. Gray (Pp. x + 90; illustrated); **Histological Methods for Bone** By E. A. Wallington (Pp. ix + 45; 1 figure); **Human Tissue Mucins** By H. C. Cook (Pp. viii + 61; illustrated by formulae). Price 60p each (limp). London: Butterworths. 1972.

Five more titles and a re-edition in this series, which is probably more familiar to

technicians than to pathologists, but which can be studied with interest by both, especially for example, as in 'The specimen', where personal practical knowledge is exemplified. Inevitably the standard is somewhat uneven, but there is an immense volume of knowledge packed away in these small books which can grace the shelves of any stain-etched laboratory bench.

H. E. M. KA

**Clinically Oriented Documentation of Laboratory Data** Edited by E. Gabrieli. (Pp. xiv + 461; illustrated. \$12.50.) New York and London: Academic Press Inc. 1972.

This book contains the proceedings of a conference with the same title as that of the book. It was held in New York in May 1971. Thirty chapters, each by different authors, are contained in a well presented lithograph form. It is moderately priced at \$12.50.

The book is about communicating data between laboratory and clinician and those aspects of information science concerned with the interpretation of those data. It is concerned with clinical chemistry, haematology, and microbiology. The book shows all the signs of the results of effective editing of symposium material. Some contributions are so brief that they are virtually communicated by the title alone. Most are moderate in length. This is probably a reflection of the knowledge of the editor in communicating information.

The chapter on the information content of laboratory data written by the Editor is to my knowledge, the first original article on information science written by a pathologist for laboratory workers.

The following subjects are amongst those dealt with in the book. (1) The objectives of laboratory medicine; (2) The three levels of communication: technical, semantic, and effectiveness (in my opinion 'efficacy' is a better word than effectiveness as used in the book; 'efficacy' means the power to produce an effect); (3) interpretation of multites surveys; (4) normal range of values derived from large-scale multites surveys; (5) evaluation of clinical laboratory computers; (6) data problems in clinical microbiology, haematology, and immunology; (7) the concern of state, community, professional societies with communication of laboratory results.