

*Technical method*

In our experiments collections were done over a 96-hour period during which time the specimens were kept refrigerated. For the same reason internal standards should be processed immediately after addition. Quenching is compensated for by the use of an internal standard where a two- to three-fold increase in the counting rate is usually found.

One of the main attractions of this method on a routine or research basis is the fact that untrained technicians can obtain excellent results after a little practice. It is also suitable for assaying a large number of samples provided pellets have been prepared in advance. Many estimations can be performed rapidly and simply by this method. It also employs inexpensive and readily available apparatus.

I am indebted to Dr Janet Perry and Dr I. Chanarin, for valuable discussions.

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**Letter to the Editor**

**The Effect of Bilirubin on the Assay of Gentamicin**

The lack of effect of bilirubin on the assay of gentamicin by the large-plate technique in the studies of Renshaw and Cornere (1974) confirms my earlier findings (George, 1973). My own studies showed no difference in serum gentamicin levels in jaundiced patients receiving gentamicin when assayed by the tube and large-plate techniques. No differences from the expected levels of gentamicin were observed when known amounts of gentamicin were added to serum with raised levels of conjugated or unconjugated bilirubin or to which sodium taurocholate had previously been added.

A possible explanation for the original findings of Stratford (1970) has recently been published (George, Bint, and Prangnell, 1974).

R. H. GEORGE  
*Department of Virology,  
 The Medical School,  
 Birmingham, B15 2TJ.*

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**Book reviews**

**Trimethoprim Sulphamethoxazole in Bacterial Infections.** Edited by L. S. Bernstein and A. J. Salter. A Wellcome Foundation Symposium. (Pp. x + 254; illustrated. £3.00.) Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. 1973.

This is an account of an international symposium held in Sardinia in April 1972; it was organized by the Wellcome Foundation to gather together the experience gained during the first three years that trimethoprim/sulphamethoxazole (co-trimoxazole) was generally available. There were sessions on the laboratory aspects, pharmacokinetics, urinary tract infections, respiratory tract infections, and paediatric use. A session on miscellaneous infections includes papers on the treatment of brucellosis (75 patients), chronic osteomyelitis (25 patients), and chronic salmonella carriers. There is also a review on the treatment of typhoid fever. The final session was devoted largely to a full account of the various side effects which had been reported to the Wellcome Foundation's Adverse Reactions Centre. This paper is particularly valuable in showing the incidence of the different side effects seen; it also points out that these are much as would be expected from treatment with or similar dose of a sulphonamide alone. The papers in each session were followed by discussions, which are apparently fully reported.

E. JOAN STOKES

**The Principles of Pathology.** By A. J. M. Reese. (Pp. 198; 25 figures. £2.25.) Bristol: John Wright and Sons, Ltd. 1974.

To do this book justice, it must be viewed in the context of the author's intentions. He states quite clearly in his preface that 'The principles of pathology' is intended to help medical and dental practitioners prepare for the examinations in basic medical sciences set by several Royal Colleges and consequently has a strong clinical orientation. Thus the audience for which it is intended has, presumably already received a grounding in general pathology during their medical training, so that this book and the lectures on which it is based should be, in theory, by way of revision.

However, because it is concise and inexpensive, it will be attractive to medical students, and the danger may be that they will use it instead of, rather than as well as, a standard textbook, though I would doubt the author ever intended that even the particular audience he had in mind should ever use it in this way.

The book itself is well written and very readable, and the inclusion of historical background welcome. The almost total absence of illustrations is a drawback, particularly for those for whom pathology may be a dim memory and those undergraduates who may be lured into thinking that this book provides a short cut to success. Illustrations increase the cost, but one wonders if the author has not been over anxious to keep the cost down in this connexion as well as in the brevity of the text. The latter covers the field of general pathology, but some expansion in