Progress in Clinical Pathology, Volume VI. Edited by Mario Stefanini. (Pp. x + 340; illustrated; \$35.75, £17.90.) New York, San Francisco, London: Grune and Stratton. 1975.

In reviewing this book of 11 chapters on a wide range of subjects, one is bound to share the misgivings of the author of the first chapter who, in respect of his subject, writes '... any single authored discussion of the field will inevitably be moulded by the limits of its writer's competence, the variety and intensiveness of his experience, and (unfortunately) the prejudices and partially developed judgments acquired over the years . . .'. Despite these limitations of the reviewer there is no doubt that each of the contributors is not only master of his subject but is very conscious of the everyday problems of shortage of skilled staff, inadequate laboratory space, uncritical over use of laboratory facilities, and the increasing need of pathology to be cost efficient. One is cautioned by such statements as 'Where demand does not exist it will be created' (Parkinson) and 'More is not better'.

The chapters on the evaluation of automated systems in clinical chemistry and multiphasic screening and biochemical profiles are refreshingly critical in their approach and useful in the guidance they give. A number of the chapters include useful tables which provide both a useful summary of the subject and a quick source of reference, though the text in the chapter on the diagnosis of parasitic infections amplifies the tables hardly at all. The proper use of antibacterial drugs is well set out in a chapter which concludes with a presentation of 30 hypothetical cases: a very useful educational exercise which could be repeated with advantage at the conclusion of the excellent chapters on the diagnosis of autoimmune diseases, HL-A histocompatibility antigens and disease, and perhaps cancer immunology. Anyone faced with designing a new laboratory or altering an existing one cannot afford not to read the chapter on this subject: it contains nothing new, but so much of what it says is easily overlooked with irritating consequences.

No book is perfect, and one would challenge a number of statements in most of the chapters. However, overall the selection of material and its presentation is good and the bibliography far from parochial. Alas, by the time most people will read this book, the references will be two years out of date, but this should not

deter anyone from ensuring that a copy is readily available.

J. BURSTON

Screening Tests in Chemical Carcinogenesis: Proceedings of a Workshop on Rapid Screening Tests to Predict Late Toxic Effects of Environmental Chemicals organized by IARC and the Commission of the European Communities held in Brussels, Belgium. Edited by R. Montesano, H. Bartsch, and L. Tomatis. (Pp. xx + 666; illustrated; US \$48.00; Sw. fr. 120.) Geneva: WHO. 1976. (Obtainable from HMSO, London.)

'The development of biological systems that selectively respond to chemical carcinogens by specific biochemical reactions, specific mutational events, or neoplastic cell transformation, identifiable in a short time period, represents a revolutionary advance in the methodology of chemical carcinogenesis studies'. It is these biological systems that form the substance of this book. The terms 'selectivity' and 'specific' may sometimes be questioned, and the phrase 'revolutionary advance' should be prefixed by the word 'potentially'; but it is indisputable that the subject is one of immense theoretical and practical importance. Several screening tests are now available and the immediate problems are to refine existing methods, to eliminate various discrepancies, and—above all—to make comparative studies of the predictive efficiency of the various procedures. Validation of short-term tests remains a formidable problem, and one hopes that IARC may produce a companion volume on the classical long-term animal tests for chemical carcinogens. Although the subject may fall outside the immediate sphere of most clinical pathologists, for the interested individual this book provides an excellent summary of present knowledge in a rapidly developing topic.

R. L. CARTER

Persons at High Risk of Cancer. An Approach to Cancer Etiology and Control. Edited by J. F. Fraumeni, Jr. (Pp. xvii + 544; illustrated; no price stated.) New York, San Francisco, London: Academic Press. 1975.

This book is the proceedings of a conference convened by the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society in Florida in 1974. The title is somewhat

ambiguous as the 32 papers deal not so much with individuals at particularly high risk as with individuals exposed to known carcinogens in any shape or form. This is a broad interpretation of the phrase 'at high risk' but one which most readers will be able to accept. The individual contributions are grouped under five headings—host factors, environmental factors, and three sections dealing with demographic and other means of investigating high-risk groups. The range of information is extensive, covering pathology, epidemiology, and many aspects of clinical and investigative medicine. There is no shortage of facts, most of them accurately presented and well documented. General proposals for future investigations are put forward and these make interesting reading. But the overall impression here is one of a mass of diverse information, some of which cannot be accurately assessed. Some of the alleged high-risk factors which are discussed are based on dubious grounds while others are of unquestionable importance; but the reader generally has to sift the evidence for himself. The main value of this book is the breadth of topic and its wealth of documentation; it is on these grounds that it is commended as a convenient and generally accurate source of basic information.

R. L. CARTER

Erratum

Royal College of Pathologists Symposium—The Pathology of Pregnancy.

On page 105, line 3 of the summary should read:

there is *now* convincing evidence that