Book reviews

Biochemical Diagnosis of the Elderly. By H. M. Hodkinson. (Pp. xii + 111; illustrated; £5·50.) London: Chapman and Hall. 1977.

This is a book written by a physician for practising clinicans. It deals with both the investigation of the elderly, in terms of the interpretation of tests, and the influence of illness and medication. Only a limited number of tests are discussed, with the result that substantial areas of biochemisty are deliberately overlooked.

The elementary statistics discussed in the delineation of normal ranges are well known to all laboratory workers, while the stated normal ranges often give no indication as to the methods used in their derivation apart from a referral to the author's MD thesis.

The author does not make it clear whether the assays described were carried out personally or by the Northwick Park Laboratory. The accuracy and precision of the assays are not discussed.

The text is clear and readable, but it is a pity that the book is so limited in scope. A comprehensive treatise on the biochemistry of the elderly might have been of great value, but this book falls far short of this. Although it may be of use to the practising clinician, its usefulness to the laboratory scientist is limited.

G. W. PENNINGTON

Marburg and Ebola Virus Infections: A Guide for their Diagnosis, Management, and Control. By D. I. H. Simpson. (WHO Offset Publication No. 36.) (Pp. 28; Sw. fr. 4; $1.60.) Geneva: WHO. 1977. (Obtainable through H.M. Stationery Office.)

This is a concise review of two recently recognised viral haemorrhagic fevers due to related viruses. Ebola virus caused particularly intense and lethal epidemics among hospital and dispensary personnel in Africa. Both may turn up in Britain and other non-tropical countries. The information and advice are admirably practical and helpful both to those working with the limited facilities of underdeveloped endemic areas and to those faced with the problems of possible imported infection with these dangerous pathogens.

N. R. GRIST

Nongonococcal Urethritis and Related Infections. Edited by Derek Hobson and King K. Holmes. (Pp. xvi + 391; illustrated; $14.) Washington: American Society for Microbiology. 1977.

This book comprises papers presented at a joint symposium held in 1976 on *Chlamydia trachomatis* and on nongonococcal infections. Papers are grouped in sections on the epidemiological and clinical aspects of nongonococcal urethritis and allied conditions, oculogenital chlamydial infection and the biology of chlamydia, the cultural and serological diagnosis of chlamydial infection, and a short section on *Ureaplasma urealyticum*.

Patients attending clinics with 'non-specific' genital infection now greatly outnumber those with gonorrhoea. The role of chlamydia as a major cause of these infections has been established; that of ureaplasmas is less certain, although they have been shown to produce urethritis in volunteers. The demand for cultural and serological facilities for the diagnosis of chlamydial infection is sure to increase, and microbiologists will find the papers on these aspects very helpful. The book provides an up-to-date guide to present knowledge of chlamydia and should also be of interest to venereologists and gynaecologists.

A. E. WILKINSON

Perspectives in Inflammation. Future Trends and Developments. Edited by D. A. Willoughby, P. J. Giroud, and G. P. Velo. (Pp. xxi + 638; illustrated; £15·95.) Lancaster: MTP Press Limited. 1977.

These are the Proceedings of the Third International Meeting on Future Trends in Inflammation, a series of multidisciplinary congresses organised by the European Biological Research Organisation. One hundred and sixty-one contributors gave a total of 55 papers under the broad headings of 'Immunological aspects', 'General aspects', 'Pharmacological aspects', and 'Chronicity'. The volume includes the edited discussions and the valuable summaries given by the Section Chairmen, Turk, Allison, Glynn, Pearson, and Willoughy.

All laboratory workers concerned with inflammation can expect to consult this volume with great interest. In my own case, I was surprised to learn (p. 455) that no detailed descriptions have been published of the synovial lesions in experimental serum sickness arthritis. Viewed as a contemporary collection of opinions on problems ranging from tumour immunology to the prostaglandins and penicillamine, these 'Perspectives' offer new knowledge, opinion, bias, and debate in a *pot-pourri* that will whet the intellectual appetite of the plane or train passenger and fill an evening for those at home.

D. L. GARDNER

Handbook of Radioimmunoassay. (Clinical and Biochemical Analysis Series, Vol. 5.) Edited by Guy E. Abraham. (Pp. viii + 832; illustrated; SFr. 240.) New York and Basel: Marcel Dekker Inc. 1977.

The outstanding increase in popularity of immunoassay in general, and of radioimmunoassay in particular, as an analytical tool in clinical laboratories in the past 10 years has not, somewhat surprisingly, been accompanied by a comparable increase in comprehensive treatises on its theoretical and practical bases. For this reason alone this handbook deserves attention. It contains 25 chapters by various authors, 21 of them being devoted to the assay of specific substances, and four of them to the more theoretical aspects of the subject, including one on instrumentation and another on simple safety precautions.

There is seemingly no rationale for the choice of substances dealt with in detail—why, for example, are there chapters on the RIA of calcitonin and collagenase but none on TSH, FSH, LH, or hGH? Is it because successful RIA depends so heavily upon the nature and availability of the three key reagents, namely, antibody, label, and standard, which are so difficult to come by and/or to standardise. Indeed, it is questionable whether descriptions of individual immunoassays have yet reached a stage where their collection together in a book is prudent.

I found the style rather difficult to read and the format somewhat less than completely pleasing. The book undoubtedly deserves a place in the larger reference libraries but is not one I could wholeheartedly recommend to beginners in RIA or to the average immunoassay laboratory.

V. MARKS