BOOKS RECEIVED

Fluorescent protein tracing

By R. C. NAIRN. 4th ed., 1976. Edinburgh and London: Churchill Livingstone. Pp. xvii and 648. £17.50.

It is always difficult to review a book that reaches its fourth edition; this fact alone is convincing commendation for it. First and foremost, "Nairn" is a reference book and a reviewer's problem is to study its highly condensed collection of facts in a relatively short time. One cannot go to this book and read the subject in a casual way. However, all the major facts of immunofluorescence are there and bearing in mind unavoidable delays in production the references are well up to date. Another achievement of this book is to provide a reference tome for many disciplines, from histopathology, microbiology and biochemistry, to scientifically orientated clinical medicine.

Most chapters are relevant to the microbiologist's point of view, and no one could think of venturing to use immunofluorescence without having consulted "Nairn". Although the overall merits of the book are recognised, it is necessary, however, to point out a few minor deficiencies.

For example, the authors favour two types of commercial microscope but others are of at least equal merit. New developments such as the Xenon burner are dismissed as too expensive when in fact they are more economical than other types because of their longer life. The section on filters is as good as usual but most readers would have appreciated a more detailed account of interference filters, which, in the last few years, have made so much difference to the subject. The indirect technique seems to have been relegated to a special technique. In diagnostic work there are many advantages to the indirect method and I am certain that these should have been emphasised.

One of the main problems in immunofluorescence is the quality of the reagents and most failures in technique are due to this. Perhaps fuller details of criteria for quality control of reagents should have been given. Autofluorescence of tissue may present problems; a number of excellent counter-stains are available, but only one is given any emphasis. A new and important technique is that of double staining; it is stated that this presents no problems. In fact, to achieve the best results, one needs the intelligent manipulation of filter systems, a point that is not discussed.

The two microbiological sections are full of key references and cover the subjects well, but one knows that these two sections can only whet the appetite and do scant justice to the two rapidly developing fields that they cover.

A reviewer's job is two-fold, one to point out weaknesses and the other to praise. The criticisms made are far out-weighed by the overall value of this book and one hardly needs to repeat the cliché that every worker in this field must have the volume on his shelf.

P. S. GARDNER

Chemotherapy of infection

By W. B. PRATT. 1977. London: Oxford University Press. Pp. xiv and 462. £6.95.

"The scientific basis of antimicrobial chemotherapy" would have been a more exact title for this excellent book which deals, not with dosages, drug regimens, or MICs, but with the mechanisms of drug activity in terms of antimicrobial action, pharmacology and adverse effects. Dr Pratt has succeeded in drawing together in less than 450 pages of text (with over 1300 references culled chiefly, but not exclusively, from the American literature) a vast body of information on many important features of antimicrobial drug action that are frequently