BOOKS RECEIVED

Basic serodiagnostic methods for diseases caused by fungi and actinomycetes

By D. W. R. MACKENZIE, C. M. PHILPOT and A. G. J. PROCTOR. 1980. Public Health Laboratory Service Monograph series 12. Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London. Pp. 44. £2.50.

The Mycological Reference Laboratory, which is held in high esteem for the quality of its diagnostic service and research in fungal serology, has recently encouraged many laboratories in the Public Health Laboratory Service to undertake primary investigations, and this manual contains the recommended basic methods. It will be useful to any laboratory setting up such a service, and it contains material that will be valuable also to clinical microbiologists and others who need to interpret the results in diagnosis. It is designed for practice in the United Kingdom, concentrating on aspergillosis, candidosis, cryptococcosis and farmer's lung disease.

The book begins with a constructive introduction to the subject of serodiagnosis, and this is followed by a list of the principal serological techniques in current use, and a useful table of the most relevant tests for the various mycoses, with notes on the commercial availability of reagents. The main text comprises detailed methods for various techniques: immunodiffusion (including counterimmunoelectrophoresis), agglutination, latex agglutination for cryptococcosis and indirect immunofluorescence. The preparation of antigens is described in an appendix. The methods are well tried and reliable, and they are fully described with much advice on practical matters for the novice. Only occasionally are there passages in the descriptions that a beginner might find obscure, or in which logical stages in the methods are assumed rather than included.

There is a judicious chapter about the interpretation of results in the various infections. Perhaps the most difficult situation is the assessment of serology in the diagnosis of disseminated candidosis, and the section on this subject is suitably cautious without being nihilistic. Striking examples of precipitin tests in candida endocarditis, for some reason appearing separately in the *Methods* section, illustrate the value of these, although it must be acknowledged that the slow evolution of this disease lends itself to these serial studies. This inexpensive manual is an excellent addition to the Public Health Laboratory Service Monograph Series, and it should have a wide circulation.

D. C. E. SPELLER

Infection in surgery—basic and clinical aspects

Edited by J. MCK. WATTS, P. J. McDONALD, P. E. O'BRIEN, V. R. MARSHALL and J. J. FINLAY-JONES. 1980. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh. Pp. 404. £26.00.

The editors and publishers should be complimented on the speed and efficiency with which they managed to bring out this book based on a symposium held in Adelaide only in May of the same year. Although it is probably a very good record of the proceedings of that meeting, providing much detailed information about selected areas of the subject, it inevitably lacks coherence and consistency of style. With over 50 contributors, an unevenness in the depth and quality with which different topics are covered is only to be expected. Perhaps more drastic editing and the use of cross references, which are almost totally lacking, could have made the book more cohesive.

Some of the best contributions are in the early introductory section, which includes an excellent overall review by Dr Burke followed by an interesting historical survey by Dr Fraenkel. Articles are then grouped together either on the basis of special general problems,