BOOKS RECEIVED

Laboratory handbook of medical mycology

By M. R. MCGINNIS. 1980. Academic Press Inc, New York and London. Pp. xiii and 661. £30.80.

This is an impressive book on the practical aspects of medical mycology and is more of a reference work than a handbook. It begins with a chapter on basic mycology which deals with fungal structures, growth, reproduction and classification and this is followed by chapters on laboratory safety, the collection and processing of specimens, the identification of moulds and yeasts, antifungal susceptibility testing and bioassay procedures, maintenance of culture collections, quality control, a synopsis of the mycoses and, finally, media and reagents. There is also a useful glossary and an appendix with lists of fungal synonyms and pathogens. The book is well illustrated with numerous high-quality photographs, mainly of the sporing structures produced by the different fungal species and there are also many references to the techniques, fungi and mycoses.

Individual mycoses are described only in outline and the approach throughout the book is very practical, with the various procedures and techniques described in detail. The section on the identification of fungi is particularly extensive and great emphasis has been placed on a modern treatment of this aspect. Practical details of serodiagnostic tests are not included but there is a table that lists the tests used for diagnosis of particular mycoses. There are some minor irritations; photomicrographs and tables are often several pages away from their point of reference in the text, and the alphabetical arrangement of fungi in the section on identification means that information on pathogens is scattered among that for non-pathogens, although it has to be admitted that this makes for easy reference.

Overall, the book provides an up-to-date and comprehensive account of the laboratory procedures and techniques used for the diagnosis of fungal infections and for the identification of fungi encountered in medical mycology laboratories. It is therefore recommended as a reference work for specialist medical mycology laboratories and for workers in microbiology laboratories who occasionally have to deal with fungi.

E. G. V. EVANS

Antibiotic and chemotherapy

By L. P. GARROD, H. P. LAMBERT and F. O'GRADY, with a chapter on laboratory methods by PAMELA M. WATERWORTH. 1981, 5th ed. Churchill-Livingstone, Edinburgh and London. Pp. 514. £18.50.

In 1963, when the first edition of this standard work was published, it was notable for bridging the gulf between the laboratory and the clinic. Yet the field of antimicrobial chemotherapy was then still relatively uncomplicated, without cephalosporins, gentamicin or the newer aminoglycosides, the lincomycins or trimethoprim; and the first few semi-synthetic penicillins had only just been introduced. Almost 20 years later, the book has outlived its original authors, Professors Mary Barber and L. P. Garrod, and after an awkward gap of 8 years since the previous edition it now faces impressive competition in an increasingly complex field.

Well produced in its new, larger format, the book happily compares favourably with other available texts. Readers will, however, be disappointed to find very few references to work published in the past 4 years. Thus, in the very rapidly developing field of β -lactam antibiotics, it is disconcerting to find that only 11 out of 186 references to penicillins and a mere five of the 77 references to cephalosporins are more recent than 1977. Authors will know that nerves of steel are required to convince their publishers about the necessity for allowing judicious revisions while a text is in press. But previous editions included references to papers appearing just a few months—rather than a few years—before publication date. We therefore look in vain for any