contributed to our understanding of the diseases caused by the mycobacteria. It will be of great use to those who wish to be informed of current thinking, problems to be faced and possibilities for the future. It is not intended to be a technical manual, but the most important references are given so that techniques may be followed up.

The first three chapters cover aspects of the genus as a whole, including structure, growth, metabolism and biochemical characteristics, and taxonomy. There is an interesting speculation that *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, which is the only species within the genus that has no environmental strains, arose from an originally non-virulent organism by genetic deletion. The chapter on immunology considers the immune spectrum in tuberculosis and leprosy and the most recent views on the relationship between delayed hypersensitivity and the skin test response to tuberculin. Brief descriptions are given of the techniques used in the laboratory diagnosis of mycobacterial disease, but these do not always reflect current methods.

Leprosy and tuberculosis have chapters of their own in which the clinical manifestations and pathology of the two diseases are described. The chapter on disease due to other mycobacteria has a puzzling emphasis on the skin pathogens *M. ulcerans* and *M. marinum*. Comments on the treatment of infections due to the *M. avium-intracellulare* complex are out of date in that it has been shown that despite in vitro resistance, most patients respond to standard anti-tuberculosis chemotherapy provided they are treated early enough. The final chapter on the chemotherapy of tuberculosis considers the basis of modern short course regimens both in terms of the different populations of bacilli that have to be eliminated and the drugs that are most effective.

This is an excellent, very readable, review of a genus that still causes an immense amount of suffering throughout the world.

P. A. JENKINS

Developments in antibiotic treatment of respiratory infections

Edited by R. VAN FURTH. 1981. New Perspectives in Clinical Microbiology, 4. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers BV, The Hague, The Netherlands. Pp. viii and 251. Dfl. 90.00.

This volume records the papers presented, and the discussion that followed them, at a conference held in the Netherlands in June 1980. In the first part, the microbiology of respiratory infections is discussed. Three of the papers give an account of current antibiotic sensitivity patterns of common respiratory pathogens. The fourth paper in this section—at first sight only marginally related to the subject of the symposium—is by far the most interesting, an account by van der Waaij of his work on colonization resistance of the digestive tract. This work, although based on studies in experimental animals, has direct relevance to the oropharyngeal colonization by hospital pathogens so often found in ill patients and so often followed by serious nosocomial pneumonia.

The second part of the book deals with pharmacokinetics and especially the problem of tissue penetration of antibiotics into sputum, the middle ear and the nasal sinuses. Much work on these problems has been published in recent years and in several cases its relevance to the treatment of infection is well established, but the papers are widely scattered and the substantial collection of data and discussion presented here is a useful contribution.

The final part of the book deals with the treatment of various types of respiratory infection. There is much of interest in both the papers and the discussions although the old intractable problems such as the treatment of respiratory infections in childhood remain as intractable as ever. Pulmonary infection in myelosuppressed or immunosuppressed patients is discussed in one paper but the more general problem of management of nosocomial pneumonia is not specifically discussed.

The discussions are said to be unabridged and largely unedited. The discussants must have been more concise than usual at a scientific meeting, or perhaps the editor has wisely done rather more than he tells us, for they read well on the whole and are valuable in revealing small but relevant pieces of research that may otherwise not have been published.

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