Essential clinical microbiology

By E. MARY COOKE and GEORGE L. GIBSON. 1983. John Wiley and Sons Ltd, Chichester. Pp. ix and 276. £6.95.

This is a moderately useful text in which many of the essentials of clinical microbiology are given brief but quite effective consideration. The authors have made a brave effort to meet the challenge of producing an acceptably concise introductory account of a dauntingly wide subject. Only those of us who have tried to write concise and apparently simple introductory texts can appreciate the difficulty of the assignment.

The book deals with major groups of pathogenic bacteria, viruses, fungi, protozoa and helminths of man. It considers infection in relation to the systems of the body. There are also chapters on hospital infection, sterilisation and disinfection, antibiotics and chemotherapeutic agents, environmental hygiene and immunisation. A short account of laboratory diagnostic methods is given to assist liaison between the clinician and the laboratory. Some of the illustrations (such as II.3) and their selection seems to be a little capricious. There are not many typographical errors; one in bold print is very unfortunate. The text is up-to-date and embraces the campylobacters and acyclovir, but misses *Gardnerella*.

Specialist readers will be uneasy about the condensation and relative balance of their particular areas of interest. For example, clinical virologists are likely to feel a little deprived; they may disagree with the prominence allocated to the embryonated egg's present role in their science. Immunologists will feel that, whilst the section on immunisation is competently handled, the information on basic immunology is quite inadequate. Mycologists and protozoologists may hold that their topics are diluted beyond a significant titre in such concise texts and I suspect that they will be unhappy with this book. The range of books of this sort now available is a fair index of the need for introductory books on clinical microbiology, and the number of recent texts suggests that it is difficult to get the mix right. This volume seems to have many sections that will be useful for nurses and medical students, and some students of biological sciences, provided that adequate further information is given in lectures and practical classes.

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