Infection in cardiothoracic intensive care

By R. FREEMAN and FRANCES K. GOULD. 1987. Edward Arnold, London. Pp. xi and 116. £7.50.

This book is written by two microbiologists working in one of the largest cardiac surgical centres in Western Europe. As a result, they are able to draw on their considerable experience of infective complications covering a wide range of open-heart surgery, including heart transplantations. The microbiological problems are discussed in 12 chapters, mainly from the way in which the infections manifest themselves to the clinician. The book is written in a clear and concise manner which physicians and surgeons alike will find easy to follow. My only complaint is its price—£7.50 for a "pocket-book". However, there is sufficient information within the volume to justify a place in all cardiothoracic units and their associated microbiology departments.

R. C. SPENCER

Bacterial meningitis

Edited by J. D. WILLIAMS and J. BURNIE. 1987. Academic Press Ltd, London. Pp. x and 237. £30.00.

This is the eighth in the series of Beecham's Colloquia. These meetings are not only demanding and enjoyable for the participants but, unlike the proceedings of so many other meetings, have also resulted in books of consistently high standard. This volume maintains that

standard. An unusual feature of these publications is the care taken to produce as much as possible of the discussions which form a key part of the meetings. Some of the exchanges can be as valuable as the main contributions.

The twelve chapters cover pathogenesis and immunity, epidemiology, chemotherapy and immunotherapy, with one chapter on laboratory diagnosis. Unfortunately, one of the potentially most interesting chapters, that by Robbins on "prospects for further vaccine development", was not delivered in time for publication, leaving only the edited discussion.

There is something here for everyone interested in bacterial meningitis. A masterly first chapter on general pathophysiology and pathogenesis is followed by a more detailed section demonstrating the power of molecular approaches to a specific pathogen, *Haemophilus influenzae*, type b. Two epidemiological chapters contrast the pattern of disease seen in tropical Africa with that in the UK and USA, showing that generalisations are inappropriate.

With chemotherapy, the current situation with antibiotic resistance, prophylaxis and therapy are all well covered. The early chapter on more basic immunology ties in well with the later one on current vaccines, although we only have the discussion on future prospects.

My only slight criticism is that this book, based on a meeting held in Autumn 1985, did not appear until 1987. Fortunately, relatively little has been lost by this. A good buy.

C. S. F. EASMON