BOOKS RECEIVED

Clinical oral microbiology

By T. W. MACFARLANE and L. P. SAMARANAYAKE. 1989. Butterworth Scientific Ltd, Guilford. Pp. xii and 284. £14.95.

This new textbook successfully integrates oral microbiology with the practice of clinical dentistry. It will be of undoubted value to dental students and dental practitioners, but also merits a place on the bookshelves of general medical microbiologists. The polymicrobial nature of many oro-facial infections and the important role of anaerobes can render the microbiological investigation of oral specimens difficult, especially for non-specialist laboratories. This book provides information to guide the diagnostic microbiologist in interpreting results of culture of oral specimens.

It is well produced with clear tables and illustrations, although some difficulty was encountered with interpretation of fig. 5.2. Unnecessary details have been commendably omitted from the text, although there are some areas where slight amplification would have been useful. For example, the section on atypical mycobacteria, a group of organisms with which the dental and oral surgeon should be familiar, is very short. There are also some details of clinical practice that could have usefully been discussed, including the risk groups for tuberculosis, the importance of oral thrush as a clinical sign in conditions other than AIDS, and the possibility of underlying immunosuppression in patients with shingles. However, these are only very minor criticisms, and the book as a whole represents excellent value for money. It is the first textbook to successfully integrate oral microbiology with dental practice in all its guises and the authors are to be commended on their approach.

I am sure that this excellent book will soon establish itself as a standard text in many dental schools, and prove useful and of interest also to those in allied disciplines.

J. BRAGG

Virus morphology

By C. R. MADELEY and ANNE M. FIELD. 1988, 2nd edn. Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh. Pp. ix and 295. £45.00.

This is an excellent book and I apologise to readers for having taken so long to write a review. Our understanding

of almost every biological entity is improved by visual representations and viruses are no exception. Hence, we have no difficulty in accepting new agents (e.g., human retroviruses and human parvovirus B19) as classical viruses if their morphology and morphogenesis are available to us. We have more difficulty in developing a concept of the unconventional agents of scrapie and Creutzfeld-Jacob disease and this is partly due to there being no convincing picture of these agents.

Professor Madeley and Dr Field have produced an encyclopaedia of the morphology of viruses. It is the second edition of a book first published 16 years previously, but so much has happened in virology in those years that it can almost be regarded as a new publication. The greater part of the book is arranged in the form of 132 electronmicrographs (some composite) on the left hand page with a commentary on the facing page. This regular arrangement means that the reader quickly becomes familiar with the way in which the book can be used as a reference work. Some familiarity with terminology and technique is required to fully appreciate the micrographs and these are given in four useful and relatively short sections (Introduction, Glossary, Notes on the Micrographs and A Question of Size) at the beginning of the book. For the first time in my professional life I think I understand the term "skew" as applied in virology by having it defined in the Glossary and illustrated by electronmicrographs, e.g., that of BK virus. The commentaries give information that allows the reader to set in context the virus illustrated. The information is detailed in terms of classification and relationships but of a general, summary nature in terms of diseases caused.

When I first received this book I wondered how I would use it. It has lain on my desk for months and I think I will leave it there since the book has "coffee-table" quality. I have certainly used it many times as a reference work and a recent reminder of this function stimulated me to fulfil my obligation to review it. Finally, it is useful for both undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, particularly when the "here is a picture of . . ." approach is used. Bearing in mind the number of micrographs, this book is very good value at £45. It is a must for all virologists and highly desirable for microbiologists and infectious diseases physicians.

J. R. PATTISON