BOOKS RECEIVED

Antibiotic interactions

Edited by J. D. WILLIAMS. 1979. London: Academic Press. Pp. xii and 183. £10.00.

This book is intended for undergraduate medical students but it is also hoped that it will be useful for student microbiologists and MLSOs and those preparing for primary examinations of the Royal Colleges. It perhaps fulfils best the first of these intentions, having too little fundamental microbiology to answer the complete need of undergraduate scientists and trainee scientific officers.

It consists of some 400 MCQs, mostly in the popular “five choice completion” format. It has three major sections, the first on microbial biology and host defences, the second on micro-organisms of medical importance, and the third on microbial diseases and clinical microbiology. The short fourth section gives examples of other types of MCQ. The questions appear to be sound and reasonable in range, and the answers mostly clearly correct. An attractive feature is that the correct answer is accompanied by a brief paragraph of explanation and immediately follows, overleaf, the question. This arrangement makes self-assessment particularly easy, and the book is to be recommended as a revision aid for the student of medical microbiology.

IAN PHILLIPS

Beta-lactamases

Edited by J. M. T. HAMILTON-MILLER and J. T. WALSH. 1979. London: Academic Press. Pp. xii and 500. £26.40.

The editors of this admirable volume have aimed to please the widest possible audience and, by a wise choice from among the many aspects of research on β -lactamases, have certainly succeeded. Naturally, not all contributions will be of equal interest to the medical microbiologist. Several of the early chapters on the structure and mode of action of these enzymes will probably not excite many non-specialists, but attention to Hamilton-Miller's historical introduction, and Sykes and Mathews's chapter on detection, assay and immunology would repay the effort. On the other hand, most of us would benefit from the part of the volume in which the β -lactamases of specific groups of bacteria are discussed, and especially the chapters on organisms important in human disease. These include *Staphylococcus aureus*, mycobacteria, gram-negative bacilli, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and anaerobes. Inevitably with a subject that maintains undiminished momentum, not all important developments are included and, at the other extreme, the general reader might have been helped by a simple account of the classification of β -lactamases rather than by mere references to publications. In general, however, the subjects included are well balanced, though clearly not intended for the absolute beginner.

The final chapter on the biological function of β -lactamases tries to persuade the reader that “ β -lactamases are present in the bacteria not primarily to hydrolyse penicillins, but [that] this function is random and secondary”. Epiphenomenon or not, the role of β -lactamases in resistance is what will interest most medical microbiologists and they will find much in this book to sustain that interest.

IAN PHILLIPS

Topics in antibiotic chemistry

Edited by P. G. SAMMES. 1979, vol. 3. Chichester: John Wiley and Sons. Pp. 203. £18.50.

This volume contains two reviews: on the mechanisms of action of nalidixic acid and its