The main part of the book surveys 37 antimicrobial drugs, including all the main antibiotics as well as antifungal agents, urinary antiseptics and amantidine. Each entry is on a fresh page and display headings cover the drug's spectrum, pharmacology, route and dosage, antagonisms and toxicity, including monitoring. The last third of the book is a therapeutic guide for various infections with tables of the drugs' diffusability in breast milk and peritoneal and haemodialyses. There is also an interesting chapter in which the authors discuss common pitfalls in chemotherapy, and with whose views few would quarrel.

Transatlantic practice is reflected inevitably in the appendices of trade names but also appears from time to time in the main text. For example, streptomycin is still the adjuvant to penicillin for endocarditis, for which we would probably prefer gentamicin, while its use in tuberculosis has clearly been superseded to a greater extent than in Britain. Nystatin does not figure at all among the antifungals, and the use of erythromycin against some strains of *Haemophilus influenzae* is not mentioned. Wider American experience shows in the specific recommendations for treating infections with atypical mycobacteria.

Ring binding allows the book to be opened flat, and bold printing and a terse style make it an ideal companion to the laboratory telephone. Faced with the off-the-cuff questions from the wards, such as the peak levels of gentamicin, the toxicity of amantidine or antagonism between cephalosporins and aminoglycosides, familiarity with this book gives the answers in seconds. It deserves a place near your desk.

J. E. TINNE

Comprehensive virology. Vol. 16—virus-host interactions

Edited by HEINZ FRAENKEL-CONRAT AND ROBERT R. WAGNER. 1980. Plenum Press, New York and London. Pp. xvi and 372. £39.50.

During the past 7 years, volumes have regularly appeared in the series entitled "Comprehensive virology". The object of the series is to collect and digest the great amount of information on viruses now available and to present this as a source book for students of all levels. Previous volumes have succeeded in this aim and this new volume is no exception.

Twenty years ago, the relationships of viruses to acute infections were rapidly, almost week by week, becoming clearer. Specific viruses were being identified in the laboratory from many of the infectious diseases; indeed, at times, the identification of new viruses outstripped their obvious connections with disease and we had symposia devoted to "Viruses in search of disease." Today, the focus of attention has shifted and it may be that we are beginning a fresh move forward in the association of viruses, the commonest pathogens of man, with diseases of a more chronic nature. As background reading to these current developments, this volume has come at an opportune time.

Chapters are devoted to general and basic aspects of virology relevant to persistence, including viral invasion, viral persistence and the evolution of viral populations and defective interfering RNA viruses in the host-cell response. They are comprehensive and well-referenced, with up-to-date information. There are sections on the persistence and transmission of cytomegalovirus, Aleutian disease of mink, the role of viruses in chronic neurological diseases and host-plant responses to virus infection. These specific topics are dealt with in a depth that permits their use as examples in other contexts.

The production and layout of the volume are pleasing, without obvious printing errors. The styles of the individual authors are pleasant and readable. By present-day standards, the price is moderate and I would, therefore, expect it to find a place on bookshelves other than those of well endowed libraries. Science moves rapidly and it would not be unreasonable to expect a new edition within a few years. I wonder, therefore, whether a volume such as this with essentially ephemeral contents really requires a hardback?

R. N. P. SUTTON