well explained. The final chapter on the "Control of the sterilisation process", is the most important one in the book for the medical microbiologist; it gives a good overview of the subject, with full details of physical, chemical and biological monitoring, including perspectives in "sterility control".

In conclusion, this book covers an enormous field in great depth, although a shorter version for medical microbiologists would be very useful. Its very large reference collection should prove invaluable both for research and for clinical microbiologists. This book also offers a better scientific understanding of the subject for many of those clinical and allied workers who are expected to apply their skills in this field.

D. V. SEAL

Laboratory-acquired infections

By C. H. COLLINS. 1983. The Butterworth Group, Sevenoaks, Kent. Pp. xi and 277. £21.00.

This is an attractively presented, well produced and conveniently sized book that deals comprehensively with the subject of laboratory acquired infections. The text is well researched with over 700 references, bearing witness to the author's extensive reading and long standing interest in the subject.

Mr Collins is well known in microbiological circles for his forthright views on safety and these are reflected in the method of presentation. Indeed, his use of the first person singular may prove to be a source of irritation to many but it is perhaps excusable in certain circumstances. For instance, some readers will learn for the first time why the Howie Code split Category B organisms into two groups. The fact that the author makes it clear that he was a member of the Howie Working Party gives authority to his explanation that this was done to avoid the publication of a minority report.

In the excellent chapter on microbiological safety cabinets, it is not clear why the Interim Advisory Committee, convened to update the Howie Code, still favours the Class I to the Class II cabinet in which to handle pathogens. One is left with the impression that cost, installation and maintenance are the important considerations whereas the Committee view is based on the difference in rate of flow of the air intake into the working aperture.

In the chapter on autoclaves, laboratories that have purchased unsuitable models are criticised and this is timely. His comment that thermocouples "are copper-constantan wires covered with PTFE" is true, but, as other types are available, the statement should not be made without qualification. To say that such thermocouples "are very thin and will not interfere with the door seal and gasket of the autoclave" is not necessarily true for all autoclaves and it is certainly not the best way to study temperature gradients in loaded autoclaves.

Mr Collins deals firmly with sceptics of the need for safety measures in laboratories. Indeed, he goes so far as to say that those laboratories that found themselves committed to considerable expenditure to conform to the Howie Code are just those which conceivably were guilty of apathy in this field in the past.

Many of the illustrations are of high quality and clearly illustrate points in the text but those which illustrate containers for the transport of laboratory specimens and the documentation required to get pathogens through customs are of poor quality and are therefore unhelpful. In spite of these minor criticisms the book represents a prodigious degree of energy. It could be read to advantage by all who work in this field. Certainly, all who teach microbiology should possess a copy as it brings together under one cover a vast amount of data which could only be obtained by the pursuit of scattered articles or reference to a number of American text books. There is little doubt that this is the definitive work on this subject in the UK and the author is to be congratulated.

A. E. WRIGHT