BOOKS RECEIVED

Bailey and Sott's Diagnostic Microbiology, 9th edition

E. J. BARON, L. R. PETERSON and S. M. FINEGOLD. 1994. ISBN 0-8016-6987-1. Mosby-Year Book, Inc., St Louis. Pp. 958. £39.95.

The preface to the ninth edition of this large book states that it has undergone several changes from its predecessors, with the use of more colour photography and highlighting of tables and charts. Descriptions of more recently described pathogens, e.g. *Rochalimaea henselae*, and advances in the laboratory diagnosis of infections caused by established pathogens are included. The text is presented in four sections: organisation and function of the laboratory; analysis of clinical specimens; aetiological agents recovered from clinical material; and laboratory identification. The content of each chapter is outlined at its start with a list of the major headings. However, the chapter layout means that one has to look at several sections to get all the information on a particular topic. The text is very readable and the tables of practical procedures are well set out and easy to follow. There are detailed sections covering diagnostic bacteriology, virology, parasitology and mycology, with numerous illustrations and colour plates that complement the text well. Occasionally, there are so many illustrations that the texts to which they refer are separated by several pages, particularly in chapter 45 on the diagnosis of parasitic infections.

The book is based on the methods and clinical experience of laboratories in North America which results in some important omissions for readers in other countries. For example, in the chapter on antimicrobial susceptibility testing there is no mention of the comparative disk testing (Stokes') method which is commonly employed in the UK, and a review of *Yersinia pestis* mentions only that plague occurs in the southern USA with no reference to the global epidemiology of this disease.

This book is a useful aid to laboratory procedures and gives an up-to-date account of diagnostic microbiology which will be particularly beneficial to those training in medical microbiology or infectious diseases.

C. R. CATCHPOLE

Pathogenic and Clinical Microbiology. A Laboratory Manual

S. S. ROWLAND, S. ROSS WALSH, L. D. TEEL and A. M. CARNAHAN. 1994. ISBN 0-316-76049-8. Little, Brown and Co., Boston. Pp. 389. Paperback £21.00.

The manual is designed to teach the culture and identification characteristics of bacteria frequently associated with disease. It is divided into two main sections: pathogenic microbiology and clinical microbiology. The former has 20 short chapters on the main pathogenic bacteria and includes details of media and basic techniques for their isolation and differentiation. The latter covers susceptibility testing, quality control and the practical examination of specimens from typical culture sites. There are appendices for abbreviations (useful for the European reader), quality control, media and stains, a short reference list, but no index.

The co-authors of this work are an assistant professor, a former assistant professor and two instructors from the Department of Medical and Research Technology, University of Maryland School of Medicine, Baltimore. In their preface they suggest that the whole work be covered during

two semesters under the direction of an instructor—practical, concise and American!

The chapters begin with a small number of clear objectives of the salient points that readers should understand when they have completed the relevant lesson. They end with study questions which test the acquisition of that understanding, and, where appropriate, the book has blank results sheets for students to complete with their own findings. This is essentially a practical workbook for the student or trainee rather than a reference text.

For reference information the main course would be better sought elsewhere, but for students seeking supplementary intake this work provides food for thought and action. It would be especially beneficial to those completing log books and to their mentors or supervisors, as the content, although concise, is both pertinent and clear.

D. E. HEALING

Viruses and Cancer

Edited by A. MINSON, J. NEIL and M. MCCRAE. 1994. ISBN 0-521-45472-7. Cambridge University Press. Pp. 309. £55.00.

The book consists of individual contributions on viruses and cancer as presented at the fifty-first Symposium of the Society for General Microbiology. It updates our understanding of viruses in the aetiology of tumours. This understanding has come a long way from the heyday of this field when it was proposed that all cancers would be shown to have a viral aetiology to the more sombre realisation that only a small group of viruses is linked with cancers. However, this group is important in elucidating new insights into the fundamental nature of the neoplastic process. An exciting concept which sets the pace of the book is that tumour suppressor genes and, in particular, *p53*, are involved in a common step in the molecular progression of the disease process. The link may be direct in the Papillomaviruses but for the Hepadnaviruses must be indirect, as the progression to neoplasia is multifactorial and involves both host and viral factors.

The book deals with each group of medically important viruses in turn—Papillomaviruses, Epstein-Barr virus, Hepatitis B virus and retroviruses. It would have been clearer if the book had been divided into major subsections as the logical layout of the book deals with each virus group and progresses from the human disease to analogous animal studies and models to using this accumulated information to discuss the prospect for future vaccination and prevention of disease. An excellent example of this approach is the discussion of Papillomaviruses and the contribution to our understanding made by the study of bovine papillomaviruses and the real potential of a vaccine to prevent disease. The inclusion of animal studies is to be commended as so many medical and veterinary advances are made in isolation from one another and much can be gained by comparing and contrasting the differences between the different hosts and agents.

On the whole, the editors have succeeded in avoiding repetition of information, a common fault of multi-author compilations. In fact, a criticism of a few chapters is that they launch into the molecular mechanisms immediately, assuming a certain level of knowledge. The book is apparently aimed at specialists but the introductory chapters provide an adequate background for anyone wishing to read further on this subject.

J. BATES