hopes have not materialised. However, during these years interest in interferon has increased rather than abated. A substance irregularly produced by cells, coded for by the cell genome and with the capability of interfering profoundly with the function of foreign nucleic acid introduced into these cells, is clearly a powerful biological tool that can be used for the understanding of cell function. In 1973, a gathering of scientists interested in the biological rather than the therapeutic aspects of interferon met in Portugal and this volume is an account of their deliberations.

The wide range of topics discussed have been loosely arranged under six general headings. The first deals both with the location of the genetic control of interferon production and with the problem of whether it is necessary for interferon to enter cells to produce an antiviral state. Next follow papers concerned with the induction of interferon by synthetic and viral nucleotides with emphasis on the nature and siting of the receptors for these synthetic inducers. The general biological law of "common cussedness" is manifest in the next section which deals with the antagonists of interferon that are found in normal tissues.

Of particular interest are the next two sections which are concerned with the interaction of the immune and interferon systems and with the effects of interferon on normal and neoplastic cell growth. The former is an intriguing aspect of host defence-mechanisms against viral infection and the latter may reflect the true natural function of interferon. The concluding section contains papers on the mechanism of action of interferon at the molecular level, and other miscellaneous topics.

The book is well edited and well presented and each contribution has a useful list of references for those who wish to delve deeper into particular topics. It should prove useful to those interested in the more academic aspects of this fascinating substance.

R. B. HEATH

Clinical bacteriology

By E. JOAN STOKES. 1975. 4th ed. London: Edward Arnold. Pp. x and 394. £6.95.

There must be a few diagnostic medical microbiological laboratories in the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, that do not look upon Dr Stokes' work as authoritative. The fourth edition of her book, like preceding editions, is sound, up-to-date and, above all, practical.

Dr Stokes is selective in the material that she adds or changes and the reader is aware, throughout the book, of that exercise of clinical judgment that she rightly esteems and worthily practises. Nothing is added simply because it is new. This realistic approach is of immense benefit to the reader, who may rely upon the methods and techniques propounded, knowing them to have been thoroughly tested and found apposite to the clinical situation.

There are some textual changes in terminology and taxonomy, together with changes in recommended techniques, for example, those pertaining to urine and blood cultures, examination of pus for anaerobes and sputum examination. Accounts of computer usage and quality control have been added, and, with respect to the latter, Dr Stokes does not flinch from stating her opinion that the contribution of the medical bacteriologist should be included. A section on prevention of laboratory-acquired infection has been added, and the section on investigation of tuberculosis has been rewritten. The section dealing with the serological diagnosis of treponemal disease has been extended, as has the chapter on media testing and other techniques.

Clinical virology does not fall within the scope of the book, but, at appropriate points in the text, the author indicates the nature of the specimens that should be taken and the relevant mode of transport.

The book is excellent, still inexpensive, and mandatory for all who wish to practice clinical bacteriology to a high standard.

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