BOOKS RECEIVED

handling of clinical specimens for microbiological examination and describes a number of plating media unlikely to be used in the UK. The two chapters on non-traditional and automated methods contain useful material which one seldom sees gathered together in this manner.

Part 3 (10 chapters) is a discussion of the occurrence of various micro-organisms in relation to the sites of infection and is well produced but otherwise unexceptional. Part 4 (21 chapters) is concerned mainly with systematic bacteriology together with individual chapters on basic virological methods, basic mycology and laboratory diagnosis of parasitic infections. Whilst these latter chapters are adequate for an introductory test they are less detailed than the sections on bacteria, and would not satisfy a specialist in these areas of microbiology.

This is a well produced and comprehensive account of the practice of medical microbiology, but the text, almost inevitably, is too overtly American to be unreservedly recommended to British readers. The price of £43.90 will, in any case, almost certainly preclude large scale purchase by individuals, but the book is well worth a place in the library of a diagnostic laboratory.

P. W. GREAVES

Viral Hepatitis: Biological and Clinical Features, Specific Diagnosis and Prophylaxis. 2nd Edition.


This volume comprises chapters originally prepared for the second edition of "Virology". It is written by five well-known authorities in the field of viral hepatitits, and presents the whole spectrum of clinical and scientific virology, from molecular, biological, immunological and clinical aspects. The book is divided into five chapters, four discussing hepatitis A, B, non-A non-B, and delta viruses and one concerned with the Hepadnaviruses and their replication. All chapters are clearly written and well illustrated with diagrams and tables to present data. Figures are used extensively to illustrate the various histological findings in viral hepatitis. Overall, there is a very high degree of referencing, although in some instances this seems to be rather excessive. For example, there are 13 references given for the incubation period for hepatitis B.

The last few years have seen major advances in the understanding of many important aspects of viral hepatitis. There has been much progress made in the understanding of hepatitis C and E, although considerable controversy remains regarding the serological testing of hepatitis C and other non-A non-B viruses. There have also been advances in the understanding of the mechanisms of damage in viral hepatitis. Although published only recently, this book has unfortunately missed many of these very recent advances. Inevitably, there are very few references to work done after the beginning of 1990, thus severely limiting the usefulness of this book as a reference source.

My other concern over this volume is the clinical component. In the foreword by Dr Melnick it is stated that the book would be welcomed not only by scientists but also by physicians. It is, therefore, disappointing to find such a limited discussion of the clinical management of patients with, for example, severe liver disease or hepatic failure. There is almost no discussion on transplantation for hepatitis and the possibility of recurrence in the donor liver. The mechanisms of allograft damage in recurrent hepatitis B is of great interest and of major clinical importance. The management of hepatocellular carcinoma is also discussed only briefly.

Overall this book is well written, well illustrated and well referenced. Unfortunately, its publication at a time of such rapid advances in our knowledge of hepatitis severely limits its use by those scientists and physicians at whom the book is aimed.

J. NEUBERGER