more emphasis might have been given to public-health legislation. Sound advice is given to the housewife and caterer.

The group that produced this report was predominantly veterinary in composition and herein lies the weakness. A more significant representation from the medical profession and from environmental health officers might have produced a better balanced document. However, the book is essential reading for all concerned with the surveillance and control of salmonellosis.

B. ROWE

Antibiotics and antimicrobial action


From a medical point of view, this little book has a limited amount to offer, and that largely to trainee medical-laboratory scientific officers and perhaps also to junior medical students. The curious lack of an index also limits its usefulness.

After a brief historical introduction, it introduces, in limited terms even for its intended readership, the concept of selective toxicity, relegating discussion of anti-tumour agents to a later chapter, and the briefest possible mention of protozoa and viruses to the very last page of the book. Furthermore, antiseptics appear initially to be excluded and are then given considerable discussion in the chapter on membrane-active agents. The methods chapter is also limited, especially in the context of the assessment of combinations of agents. There is no mention of the investigation of bactericidal activity, although the concept is referred to elsewhere.

There then follow five chapters on specific agents, arranged by site of action. The emphasis is on mechanisms of action, and again the treatment is elementary. For example, although the “Park” nucleotides are mentioned, there is no discussion of penicillin-binding proteins or of specific enzymes inhibited by penicillins, and the discussion on agents that inhibit ribosomal activity is over-simplified, to the point of untruth. The omission of metronidazole, and perhaps also nalidixic acid, deprives the authors of interesting concepts in the relevant chapter.

The final chapter on prospects is largely devoted to the problem of resistance, again curiously limited. The enzyme inactivation of aminoglycosides should surely not stop at the mention only of the adenylylation of streptomycin. The treatment of β-lactamases, here and elsewhere in the book, is thoroughly confusing.

However, there are few actual errors. Table 4, dealing with the properties of penicillins, is perhaps an exception: surely it cannot have been intended to confine it only to bacilli, or to relate β-lactamase sensitivity to oral dosage?

I conclude that this is a book that is fairly well on target, if that target is school and college rather than university and doctors.

I. PHILLIPS