The Antimicrobial Pocket Book 1991

Although small in dimensions this book is not short on facts. In terms of information provided it is comprehensive, if not quite encyclopaedic. The format is logical and easy to follow, though a basic knowledge of microbiology and pharmacology is required to make the most of it, and also to identify and understand the minor eccentricities and personal preferences expressed in the advice on prescribing. Some of the choices of antimicrobial agents have a rather transatlantic flavour, e.g., the recommendation of clindamycin for anaerobic infections and oral cephalosporins as first-line agents in respiratory infections. I am not sure the title of the book is strictly correct. It is certainly pocket-sized, but the authors have made it more of a concise textbook of microbiology with chapters on specific infections, regulations for international travel and classification of bacterial pathogens. Overall, I think it will serve as a most useful aide-memoire for junior and perhaps more senior, hospital medical staff in the field of microbiology and infectious diseases. It may also form the template on which to base a hospital antibiotic formulary, with modifications to suit local requirements.

J. STONE

New Perspectives on Streptococci and Streptococcal Infections

This brightly coloured and sturdy hardcover book records the proceedings of the XIth Lancefield International Symposium on Streptococci and Streptococcal Infections which was held in Siena, Italy in September 1990. These symposia are held at three yearly intervals and attract the leading authorities and researchers in the field; all 210 contributions presented at the symposium are included in the book. The production and publication have taken a very reasonable 18 months, overtaking the proposed volume recording the Xth Symposium of 1987 which is not yet in print.

The main part of the book is made up of two- or three-page contributions reproduced from typed manuscripts submitted by the authors. This method of presentation results in variable typeface and size of print but all are clear to read and the tables, graphs and photographic figures have been reproduced very well. The page limits imposed on the authors have encouraged a succinct presentation of their material and little space has been wasted throughout.

The contents of the book are divided into 12 sections—epidemiology and clinical aspects: diagnostic methods; adhesion; cellular components, products and vaccines; sequelae; enterococcal and pneumococcal infections; genetic and molecular basis for antibiotic resistance and pathogenicity; antibiotic sensitivity; animal models; group B streptococcal infections; ultrastructural investigations; and immune responses. The subject index made up from keywords supplied by the authors is rather short at only four and half pages.

The text provides a good balance of contributions from the epidemiological, clinical and therapeutic to the molecular and genetic dimensions of the subject. Of particular interest are the reviews of recent changes in epidemiology of group A streptococcal infection in the USA and certain European countries (including local increases in the incidence of rheumatic fever and invasive infection) and the rapid advances being made in streptococcal genetics and molecular biology. Continuing research into the aetiology of post-streptococcal nephritis and rheumatic fever shows the complexity of these subjects but does not yet appear to be close to a full explanation of the editors. In summary, this book gives the best statement available of the current position of streptococcal diseases and related research. The organisms remain common and important to a wide range of clinical and research workers in the medical and veterinary fields, any one of whom is likely to find much to interest them in this volume. It will also be a very useful reference work that should be made widely available in general medical and veterinary libraries and laboratories. The cost is no more than one would expect for such a book.

M. BARNHAM

Current Topics in Medical Mycology, volume 4

A further volume in this excellent series of essays on medical mycology in the 1990s underscores the exciting evolution of the discipline. The editors of Volume 4 have collected 11 reviews and discussion papers on widely diverse subjects with greater emphasis being given to medical aspects compared to some of the previous volumes. However, the inclusion of basic concepts, where relevant, offers the non-specialist the necessary background information to appreciate the subject matter.

New antifungal drugs and their therapeutic potential are presented by Cauwenbergh (azole antifungals and their skin kinetics), Ryder and Mith (allylamines) and Degreet (treatment of dermatophytosis). Numerous high-quality black and white photomicrographs complement a thorough appraisal of skin and nail infections caused by Scytalidium spp. (Moore). Chapters on molecular (Pfaffer) and killer yeast toxin (Polonelli and colleagues) approaches to epidemiological typing of Candida sp. illustrate the interest and activity in this area. Individual chapters on broncho-pulmonary aspergillosis (Ikemoto) and quinone mycotoxins (Kawai and colleagues) exemplify the diversity of fungal infections in man. The final two chapters address mycology teaching programmes in Latin America (Negroni) and the urgent need for a mycoses reporting system in North America (Halde and colleagues).

The text for each chapter is clear, organised and lucid, reflecting close editorial control. Each chapter is complemented by extensive referencing and a detailed index enables the reader to locate specific areas with ease. The non-specialist reader is bound to come away with the impression that fungi offer a multitude of research opportunities. The medical mycologist will enjoy reading timely reviews on topical subjects.

M. D. RICHARDSON