

THE DEPARTMENT OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES OF PHARMACY

What a pharmacist should know about Toxicology is a much discussed subject; some taking the view that he should be well-grounded in the subject and others that he should know only the fundamentals regarding the treatments of the more common poisons. The following paper, "The Teaching of Toxicology," by Prof. Clayton S. Smith will be helpful to all teachers of the subject and to the makers of our college curricula.—C. B. JORDAN, *Editor*.

THE TEACHING OF TOXICOLOGY.

BY CLAYTON S. SMITH.

That the pharmacist needs to know something of toxicology has long been recognized. This has been adequately demonstrated by the recent painstaking survey of Dr. Charters and his associates. In their report, "Basic Material for a Pharmaceutical Curriculum," the section on toxicology contains primarily statistical data obtained from eight (8) boards of health, nineteen (19) coroners, fifty-five (55) hospitals and twenty-five (25) physicians relative to cases of poisoning as well as data secured from the reports of 934 retail pharmacists. In addition, the actual poisonous substances prescribed as drawn from a list of 17,577 prescriptions are recorded. The construction of a curriculum by the functional method is a recently developed procedure. So far as I am aware, pharmacy is the only profession outside of the field of education to which it has been applied.

This method of curriculum building applied to pharmacy seeks first to learn what the pharmacist does, and, second, to determine what he must know in order to perform his duties intelligently. The traditional method of curriculum construction is based upon individual opinion, or upon the consensus of opinion of several teachers. A group of men or an individual decides on the basis of personal judgment what shall be included in a given curriculum. By this method courses are often included because of the influence of departments or individuals rather than for the value of the course of a practicing pharmacist. The functional method of curriculum building is objective. Its ideal is to substitute facts for opinion. In their report Dr. Charters and his associates were not quite able to reach this ideal and where gaps occurred in the facts sought, the concensus of opinion of experts was substituted. What is true as to the method for the construction of a curriculum is also true in the development of a course, for the course is an integral part of the curriculum.

In approaching the problem of what shall be included in a course in toxicology we have two methods at our disposal. If it had not been for Dr. Charters' report we would have had only one. To secure the facts necessary for a functional approach requires considerable time and the intelligent coöperation of many individuals. Because we have the statistical data covering the various poisons handled by the pharmacist and the emergency cases treated by him does it mean that the functional method will solve our problem as to what goes into a course in toxicology? I think not. When the functional study of toxicology was undertaken it was originally planned to include with each poison, the organs affected, the symptoms produced and the antidotal treatment. To place the last-named