

BOOK REVIEW

THE PHARMACEUTICAL POCKET BOOK. Sixteenth Edition. Pp. x + 422. The Pharmaceutical Press, 17, Bloomsbury Square, London, W.C.1. 1953. 18s. 6d.

Pharmacy is never static; continued progress and changes in medical and surgical treatment necessitate corresponding modifications in a reference book of this type. The editor and his collaborators have limited space if they are to preserve the pocket-book nature of a publication. New material must therefore mean the disappearance of old pharmaceutical fashions; the skill and knowledge required for plaster-spreading and pill-making must give way to modern methods of tableting and sterilisation. The compilers have done their work well; nowhere is this seen better than in the dispensing section. Plasters and blisters receive but passing mention; pill excipients have been reduced to five, but sterile products are treated comprehensively. Homœopathic pharmacy has been wisely retained; whatever are the merits of the principles of homœopathy there are still some practitioners in this country and their prescriptions have to be dispensed. Physico-chemical aspects of pharmacy, such as hydrogen ion concentration and isotonic solutions, are adequately dealt with; a note on oxidation-reduction potential might be added with advantage in view of the student's application of this in studying bacterial metabolism. The principal acts and regulations concerned with the practice of pharmacy have been excellently summarised and include the Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1948, the Radioactive Substances Act, 1948, and the Therapeutic Substances (Prevention of Misuse) Act, 1953. Veterinary medicine receives adequate attention, including a comprehensive posological table of inestimable value to the pharmacist who practices in agricultural areas. Finally, there is a dictionary of synonyms which, although not including trade-names, still contains over 4,000 entries. Since the book is essentially used as a means of quick reference and has rightly achieved a reputation for accuracy, the following points should be noted for future revisions:—on page 154, the full title "Medical Practitioners and Pharmacists Act, 1947" should be used; on page 199, "Licensing Authorities under the Therapeutic Substances Act, 1925" should read "The Minister of Health (for England and Wales); The Secretary of State for Scotland; and the Minister of Health and Local Government for Northern Ireland." Similar changes should be made in the list of appointing authorities for the Advisory Committee; on page 224, "Nalorphine" should read "Nalorphine Hydrobromide." The index could also be extended with advantage; the reader failed to find references to preservatives or antioxidants although they are mentioned in the text of the book. These are minor criticisms of an edition which maintains the prestige of *The Pharmaceutical Pocket Book* and which is recommended as an essential for all practising pharmacists.

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