

# PHARMACOPOEIAS AND FORMULARIES

## THE BRITISH PHARMACEUTICAL CODEX 1954, SUPPLEMENT 1957\*

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Few of those whose responsibility it is to keep up to date with modern drugs can rely on memory for the necessary information on the latest additions to therapeutic resources. The number of drugs being introduced and the rapidity with which they can become established is reflected in the Addendum 1955 to the British Pharmacopoeia 1953, in which no less than 10 of the drugs were not described in the B.P.C. 1954. It is not only a matter of knowing the purpose and manner of use of the new drugs that secure recognition in the Pharmacopoeia but also of assessing the value of the numerous compounds offered by an enterprising pharmaceutical industry. An authoritative reference book surveying the most important introductions is needed and the Supplements to the British Pharmaceutical Codex, in the compilation of which a judicious process of selection is exercised, provides exactly what is required between issues of the main volume.

The Supplement 1957 to the B.P.C. 1954 contains monographs on 44 new substances and they illustrate the variety of fields in which research is enabling progress in therapeutics to be achieved. Among the new substances described are antibiotics, anti-inflammatory agents related to cortisone, antihistaminic compounds, ganglion-blocking agents, anti-convulsants and the insulin zinc suspensions. It is perhaps a surprise to find, not quite buried among these pharmacologically active compounds, monographs on spearmint oil and sulpham blue. The oil is required for the preparation of spearmint water, no doubt a useful, if not a novel flavouring agent in 1957. The dye is described as being "used in the colouring of medicines", and its inclusion in the Supplement is perhaps a non-scientific concession to pharmaceutical elegance which has the merit of serving a dual purpose since the blue colour it normally imparts can be changed to green by use with tartrazine.

In the Formulary section of the book a few new preparations have been introduced. It is noteworthy that reserpine is the only instance of a substance which is the subject of a new general monograph being represented by a tablet in the Formulary section. This is probably a reflection of what seems to be the growing practice of manufacturers not to make a new substance available except in the form of compounded preparations. The compilers have appreciated that in such instances the inclusion of a B.P.C. tablet serves no useful purpose. The alleged dangers of borated dusting powders have been recognised to the extent of reducing the boric acid content of these preparations to 5 per cent and including a formula

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for a dusting powder containing only zinc oxide, starch and talc. For the same reason provision is made in four of the Standard Dressings for replacing boric acid by a less suspect antiseptic. Additions to the Surgical Dressings Section include monographs on lint and gauze made from rayon and on penicillin gauze dressing.

In addition to the inclusion of monographs on new substances and preparations, the Supplement brings the B.P.C. 1954 up to date by giving details of all the alterations and amendments made since the 1954 book was issued. Most have been published previously but it is convenient to have them bound in one volume with the new material.

The Supplement will be welcomed by those whose daily work could not be done without the Codex, and the Editor is to be congratulated on having welded a compilation, to which many different hands and minds have contributed, into a unified and consistent whole.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*MATHEMATICS AND STATISTICS FOR USE IN PHARMACY, BIOLOGY AND CHEMISTRY.* By L. Saunders and R. Fleming. Pp. x + 257 (including Index). The Pharmaceutical Press, 17, Bloomsbury Square, London, W.C.1. 1957. 27s. 6d.

This is a very useful book for anyone working in a biological field who wants to improve his mathematical knowledge. Its fifteen chapters proceed from arithmetic, algebra, and graphs through differential calculus, trigonometry and probability to statistical analysis and applications. Additional mathematical theorems and techniques and statistical tables are provided in a number of appendices. To cover all this ground in so few pages is a remarkable achievement, and the authors deserve much credit for their concise and readable English. Since the material is so highly compressed, there are few explanatory passages to ease the reader's difficulties when the mathematical logic is not self-evident. On the other hand, worked examples are clearly set out and give guidance in practical applications, particularly of the statistical material. For the honours students for whom it is intended, this book is a valuable supplement to other teaching; it is also likely to be very useful to research workers for reference, particularly because it contains so much material in such a small volume. The production and the appearance are excellent.

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*GLOSSARY OF INDIAN MEDICINAL PLANTS.* By R. N. Chopra, S. L. Nayar and I. C. Chopra. Pp. xx + 330. Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, India, 1956.

An all-India survey of medicinal and poisonous plants was begun more than thirty years ago to investigate the extensive native materia medica. Attempts have been made to establish the true botanical identity of each of these drugs and to set in order the lists of vernacular names. A herbarium, the first of its kind in India, of some 1,600 species of medicinal plants has been collected throughout the sub-continent and a museum of vegetable drugs is being organised.

The Glossary under review is the work of this survey. It is a list of some 2,000 native Indian medicinal plants and the information concerning them, "... based on a critical study of the literature . . ."; it also includes some of