

PHARMACOPOEIAS AND FORMULARIES

SUBSIDIA PHARMACEUTICA I (S.Ph.I.)*

Reviewed by J. P. Todd

The Scientific Centre of the Pharmaceutical Society of Switzerland, founded little more than two years ago, has just published a work of more than usual interest. Attention is first attracted by the style of presentation consisting of a binding cover and loose leaf system with numbering of the pages and division into sections to allow the insertion of new pages or even new sections when necessary. This system allows the work to be kept up to date without the inconvenience of addenda or new editions and is the most logical method of dealing with an ever-changing subject and might be adopted with advantage for some of our own standard works. The book is beautifully printed on high grade paper suitable to withstand the vicissitudes of a loose leaf system and the seven different sections into which it is divided are easily found by means of a thumb index printed on stout paper separators.

A second point of interest is the use of International Non-Proprietary Names as main reference titles in the Index of Names which constitute Section I. The classification of new remedies by systems which may depend on the Brand Name, the Common, Generic or Approved Name, the systematic chemical name or sometimes even on the therapeutic action makes life a little difficult for the busy practitioner in pharmacy trying to keep abreast of the modern *Materia Medica*. As in other spheres, whole-hearted International agreement on suitable short titles and their use in standard reference books could do much to solve this difficult problem. Our Swiss colleagues have pointed the way we should go.

Section I is, however, more than a list of new and better synthetics. In it can be found many old friends like Pyroxilin and Crystal Violet. Even in dealing with these humble substances there is valuable information in the wealth of cross reference indicating the title in other official works as well as the maker's name and the branded name of specialities where these exist. It is interesting to learn that Colloxylinum of the Ph. Helv. V. is nothing more exotic than Pyroxilin and that Crystal Violet (Internationally—Methyl Rosaniline) is the principal constituent of no less than six branded specialities.

In Section II a therapeutic system of classification is adopted. This section begins with an account of the structure, the physiology and functioning of the autonomic nervous system and concludes with a very useful list of the drugs and specialities affecting this system. The names of drugs bearing brand names or approved names are arranged in alphabetical order and their chemical structure is given along with indications for their use. Something has gone wrong with the numbering of the pages in this section and there are two pages numbered 25 and no page 23.

The remaining five sections are chiefly of domestic interest. They consist of a Section (III) obviously intended for amplification at a later date dealing with tests of identity and purity of some of the newer medicaments, and a section on galenical pharmacy, mainly an account of the preparation of sulphonamide suppositories using polyethylene glycols of varying complexity as the basis.

A commentary on the Prescriptions Magistrales which was formerly published separately, is included in Section V while Section VI describes a number of pieces of useful equipment suitable for the dispensary, including a bacterial filter, a still, a homogeniser and an ion exchange column for the preparation of purified water.

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The final section gives tables and formulae for the dilution of liquids of different specific gravity and concentrations of active material.

The volume is complementary to the standard works of reference and is clearly intended to be enlarged with new material as the opportunity occurs. By widening the coverage and scope especially of Sections I and II this work could be made to occupy an important place among pharmaceutical reference books.

Professors Steiger and Büchi and their collaborators are to be congratulated on a fine beginning and encouraged to continue their efforts.

BRITISH NATIONAL FORMULARY 1957*

Reviewed by Miles Weatherall

This edition of the British National Formulary differs from its predecessors because the preparations listed in it are classified according to their use instead of their pharmaceutical form. The Notes for Prescribers of the main edition have been extended and used as preambles to the list of preparations in each group. The result appears to be as convenient for reference as the main edition and at first sight more likely to be helpful to the prescriber whose mind is not yet made up. However, this more rational arrangement of the contents, being unaccompanied by any more critical selection than in the main edition, emphasizes the tiresome consequences of prescribing "by habit and tradition", and the Joint Formulary Committee are to be congratulated on having made the unreasonableness of the present position more evident by their new arrangement. There are still 23 expectorants, 29 sedative applications to the skin and 30 purgatives listed, and it would be a remarkable physician who could quote different indications for each of them and support his indications with evidence from properly controlled clinical trials. If all these preparations are therapeutically effective (about which there may be some reasonable doubt) it would not be difficult to compare their activities experimentally and show which were best. The hard facts of such trials would be more informative than some of the conventional observations contained in the present Prescribers' Notes, and a reduction in the number of identically active (or inactive) remedies which are put before the practising doctor would be no bad thing.

*Alternative Edition based on a Pharmacological Classification. Pp. 245 (including Index). The British Medical Association and the Pharmaceutical Press, London. 7s. 6d.; interleaved copy, 10s. 6d.