

BOOK REVIEW

DISINFECTANTS. THEIR VALUES AND USES, by W. E. Finch. Pp. 188 (including Index). Chapman & Hall, London, 1958. 30s.

To any pharmacist the values and uses of disinfectants should always be an interesting subject. He should not be disappointed, therefore, when he finds that this book deals primarily with the phenolic and quaternary ammonium type of disinfectants, together with some information given on the hypochlorites.

Its main concern is in the formulation of disinfectants and in the various methods available for assessing their activities; much of this information was hitherto unpublished. We are given an insight into the uses of different phenolic fractions, soaps and hydrocarbon carriers in the manufacture of Lysol and the black and white disinfectant fluids, and their influence on the physical characteristics and the germicidal properties of such preparations. There are also sections on the chloroxylenol disinfectants. The chapter on the quaternary ammonium compounds deals primarily with their adsorption on fibres and their efficacy in the disinfection of hospital blankets, and the chapter on the hypochlorites, which also mentions the chloramines, discusses briefly their use in various aspects of medicine and hygiene, including the treatment of wounds and burns.

Much attention is given to the methods of testing disinfectants and to the usefulness of the results so obtained. The Rideal-Walker and other phenol coefficient tests are criticised in this respect, the practicality of the Use-Dilution Confirmation test is discussed, and results from such tests are compared with those from a modified Chick-Martin test and an infected scalpel test.

The great difficulty with the book is that the information is presented in such a diffused manner that it makes it difficult to read and comprehend. There is a tendency to change the aspect of the topic under discussion and to insert bits of information which are really irrelevant in their context. For instance, there is a sentence on the photogenic properties of *Pseudomonas pyocyanea* inserted in a discussion on the activities of phenolic substances adsorbed on woollen fibres (p. 117). Some of the tables are difficult to understand, and the subject index could be improved; for example, skin disinfection is indexed on pp. 65, 74 and 75, but there is also a section headed "*Skin sterilization*" on p. 118. The glossary is trivial, and here and there are touches of unconscious humour; thus, "The water closet can be replaced by the chemical closet" (p. 150), and "other methods of sterilization . . . are filtration; exposure to ultra-violet light which is practised for the sterilization of air, sunlight and supersonic waves" (p. 152).

The emphasis is on a few specific disinfectant formulations, and others receive scant treatment; iodine is dismissed in eight lines, the mercurials in nine lines, heat sterilization (in any case out of context is such a book) in just over a page, and so on.

The print is clear, the book is easily handled, and there are very few typographical errors.

G. SYKES.