

PHARMACOPOEIAS AND FORMULARIES

THE EXTRA PHARMACOPOEIA—MARTINDALE, VOL. I, 24th EDITION*

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If the galaxy of pharmaceutical information in this new edition of *The Extra Pharmacopoeia* is surpassed or even approached by any other book of comparable or larger size, this reviewer has never seen or heard of such a volume. Since 1883, when William Martindale produced the First Edition of *The Extra Pharmacopoeia* to provide an epitome of information on drugs used in Great Britain, it has kept pace throughout its 23 revisions with developments in the pharmaceutical field. Its scope has also consistently increased and for many years interest in it has extended quite beyond the United Kingdom and the Commonwealth nations. The twenty-fourth edition provides more information about foreign drugs, pharmacopoeias, and formularies than any of the earlier editions. This should add to its universal appeal which it is hoped may be matched by increased distribution in countries other than those for which it was originally designed.

The new edition represents a complete revision which is at once apparent from the added information on new drugs and the up-to-date documentation in the form of short abstracts of recent articles published in pharmaceutical and medical journals. The preface states that in order to accomplish such a thorough revision some deletions were necessary. It goes on to explain that the deletions are few since, once established, drugs take a long time to become obsolete. When one considers the amount of space given to botanical drugs, for example, which have not had official status in any modern pharmacopoeia for several decades, one may question whether the deletions are as extensive as they should have been. During recent years obsolescence of many drugs has begun earlier and proceeded more rapidly to complete oblivion than was true 30 or 40 years ago. The supplementary list of drugs, for example, contains information on many older items which seem to possess little, if any, reference value. In the few instances when information on obsolete drugs is needed, older editions of *The Extra Pharmacopoeia* could be used advantageously.

Despite the space allocated to material that may have little or no reference value, the presentation of information on new drugs is adequate and excellent. For example, new information on cortisone and corticotrophin has necessitated a fourfold increase in the number of pages of text since 1952. Other adrenocortical hormones which have become available since the publication of the last edition have been added. These include fludrocortisone, hydrocortisone, prednisolone, and prednisone. The example is typical of comparable expansion, including information on new drugs, found in all of the therapeutic groups in which significant developments have occurred during the past six years.

The basis of the arrangement of sections continues to be one of "planned inconsistency", which is partly alphabetical and partly pharmacological. The design of Volume I of the twenty-third edition, published in 1952, has not been followed throughout the new edition. Most of the deviations appear to be well

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conceived and to add to convenience by bringing together drugs in the same therapeutic categories and yet avoiding pharmacological groupings characteristic of textbooks. Examples of this type of arrangement in the present edition include the grouping of all antipyretics and analgesics under the main heading of "Acetylsalicylic Acid", placing information on sympathomimetics under "Adrenaline", following the information on amphetamine with that relating to other central stimulants and anorexic drugs, arranging the discussion of adrenocortical hormones following cortisone, and grouping the antihistaminics under promethazine hydrochloride.

The "planned inconsistency" design, however, causes the user of the book no great inconvenience if he once reconciles himself to the fact that a strictly alphabetical arrangement is not used. The general index, containing nearly 20,000 entries, is so well planned, with adequate cross indexing under every conceivable name, that one experiences no difficulty in locating quickly the information he seeks.

The arrangement of information on each principal drug begins with the main title, in English, followed by other names employed in foreign pharmacopoeias and elsewhere. The doses given come next and are usually those in the British Pharmacopoeia or the British Pharmaceutical Codex if the drug is described in either of these. Pharmaceutical information includes chemical and physical properties of pharmaceutical interest such as solubility data, melting points, and boiling points.

One of the most important features is the provision of concise descriptions of the principal toxic effects, antidotes, contra-indications, and uses of drugs under these respective headings. The pharmacological and therapeutic information is supplemented by abstracts of original papers or reviews. The information included in these abstracts is of especial value because the documentation enables one to refer to the original articles.

Antibiotics, immunological products, and radioactive isotopes have been placed in special sections, the latter of which is new and includes up-to-date information on the toxicity, hazards, precautions, and supply of isotopes employed in clinical and experimental medicine.

The format of the twenty-fourth edition of *The Extra Pharmacopoeia* is essentially the same as that of its recent predecessors. The use of slightly larger type for the abstracts and some other parts of the text is commendable and contributes to ease of reading. The wealth of authentic information presented so succinctly in compact form places the book in the unique position of having no counterpart as a usable and valuable pharmaceutical reference treatise. Those who contributed to the new edition are to be complimented upon a stupendous task completed in a most commendable manner.