

BOOK REVIEW

DRUGS OF CHOICE 1958-1959. Edited by Walter Modell. Pp. 931 (including Index). Henry Kimpton, London, 1958. 95s.

The shortage of good clinical trials and the multitude of new drugs demands not less than a man's whole labour properly to keep up and write successfully in the field. One, perhaps the only, means of providing the needed work of reference is to collaborate: what no one man can achieve, three or thirty may more easily manage. Thirty-seven American physicians have in fact just undertaken this great labour, and it is most interesting to see what sort of achievement has resulted. There is no doubt that this book has cost its contributors much labour; its bulk alone is suggestive, though it might have been still more laborious to write more briefly. It is not clear whether the book is the first of an annual series, as its date suggests. It contains much general matter which will not change from year to year, as well as opinion on new remedies which may well need revision as time passes, or may become unimportant if the remedies are superseded.

The statements made are generally worthy and appear to be reliable, but they are not supported by appropriate references. References are provided at the end of each chapter, and are admirably recent: but the lack of citations in the text is a serious inconvenience to a critical reader and makes it most difficult to trace the source of a particular opinion and decide what weight of evidence supports it. Perhaps it is unreasonable to desire such detail in what are mainly personal reports on experience. But it is often better to spend time looking at evidence than on hearing what people think. As a symposium of personal reports on clinical experience, this book is a large and generous collection.