

PHARMACOPOEIAS AND FORMULARIES

BRITISH VETERINARY CODEX SUPPLEMENT 1959*

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“Having given careful consideration to the scope of the proposed new edition of the Codex, the British Veterinary Codex Committee decided that, before starting on a complete revision, the needs of users of the Codex would best be served by first publishing a supplement to the present edition.” The publication of the *British Pharmacopoeia of 1958* and of the *British Pharmaceutical Codex of 1959* was awaited in order to embrace the changes likely to be made in the new editions of these two works, and thanks to liaison with the British Pharmaceutical Codex Revision Committee it has been possible to publish the B. Vet. C. Supplement almost simultaneously with the new B.P.C.

The supplement contains 47 additional, and 38 amendments to existing, Part I Monographs; 6 additional, and 42 amendments to existing, Part III Monographs. Of the 47 additions to Part I, however, 33 relate to new substances in the B.P. 1958 or the B.P.C. 1959.

In Part I, special interest attaches to the anthelmintics, Bephenium, Picadex and to the four salts of Piperazine, to the insecticide Dieldrin, to the synthetic steroids, Prednisolone and Prednisone and their Acetates, and to substances such as glucogenic agents (Propylene Glycol and Sodium Propionate), Calcined Magnesite, Acinitrazole, Furazolidone and Nicarbazin—all of which are likely to have wide usage in animal production in circumstances which rarely permit of full veterinary control. There are indeed important differences between medical and veterinary usage of potent materials, especially in the case of the so-called economic animals, and this underlines the need for standards such as are laid down in the B. Vet. C., and for widespread compliance with them. In view of the fact that a standard has now been laid down for an oral magnesium preparation which “. . . consists chiefly of magnesium oxide, and is usually prepared by igniting naturally occurring magnesite,” it may be questioned whether in fact the standard should be expressed in terms of the oxide and not of elemental magnesium. It would be unfortunate if there arose the same confusion over magnesium as has arisen earlier in agricultural circles from the use of “CaO” and “P₂O₅”.

In Part II, new monographs have been added on Canine Distemper and Hepatitis Antiserum, Johne's Disease Vaccine (Living), Myxomatosis Vaccine (Living), and Ovine Enzootic Abortion Vaccine, Attenuated (Living), and there have been some important amendments to existing monographs. Usage of some of these materials by lay persons depends upon other circumstances, but the fact that certain sheep vaccines and sera are widely employed by farmers themselves adds to, rather than detracts from, the need for stringent standards.

In Part III chief interest centres upon a monograph on Antibiotics as Dietary Supplements. The very large sales of antibiotic supplements, the use for certain purposes or on certain premises of much higher levels than those normally recommended, the debate that continues upon the disadvantages and dangers of permitting the development of resistant strains of micro-organisms in stock—and in their human attendants—are all factors that emphasize the need for adequate control of this category of material.

* Published by direction of the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. Pp. xviii + 134 (including Index). The Pharmaceutical Press, 17, Bloomsbury Square, London, W.C.1. 35s. (Postage, U.K. 1s. 3d.; Overseas, 2s.).

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The six years that have elapsed since the original publication of the B. Vet. C. have seen an important and useful rôle established for it. The veterinary field is developing rapidly and it will surely not be long before a new edition, or further supplements, appear.

BOOK REVIEWS

AN INTRODUCTION TO PHARMACOLOGY. By J. J. Lewis. Pp. xii + 826 (including Index). E. and S. Livingstone Ltd., Edinburgh, 1960. 55s.

Need has been felt for a longer textbook of pharmacology, dealing with all the drugs in use in clinical practice and at a price within the means of the undergraduate student. The author has attempted to meet that need in this book which is a careful and comprehensive summary of the chemical structures, the effects and the main clinical uses of drugs. The care with which this book has been written and prepared is obvious; there are exceedingly few misprints. The absence of references which might act as an introduction to the literature, the confinement of the section on quantitative and general pharmacology to one brief introductory chapter, and the emphasis on the overall effects of drugs in preference to mode of action makes this a book much less suitable for the student of science who is reading pharmacology than for the student of medicine.

M. F. LOCKETT.

HALE WHITE'S MATERIA MEDICA, PHARMACOLOGY AND THERAPEUTICS. 31st Edition. By A. H. Douthwaite. Pp. viii + 525 (including Index). J. and A. Churchill, Ltd., London, 1959, 25s.

Knowledge is advancing increasingly rapidly in all branches of medicine. It is probably going to advance more quickly in the future. The knowledge we have already will be superseded in many respects. Consequently, it becomes increasingly difficult to decide what factual material should be put before medical students. The less the better is a maxim which will comfort both the overloaded student and the harassed teacher, and it has the merit that the less purely factual matter is taught, the more time is left to consider the evidence for the facts and the proper weighing of evidence. A student who has learnt how to assess evidence will be an intelligent doctor ten years hence. One who has not will be a mixed-up victim of superseded knowledge and commercial pressure, and his patients will suffer accordingly.

Hale White's Materia Medica is an old book which has maintained its popularity to the extent of thirty-one editions since it first appeared in 1892. The newest edition is up to date in the sense that it deals with drugs such as chlorothiazide and dexamethasone, and traditional in that it preserves its authoritarian approach, giving no evidence for the statements made and no references to places where the evidence can be found. Characteristically, there is no entry in the index for "therapeutic trial", "clinical trial" or "trial" and it does not appear that this crucial subject is discussed at all. Nor is there any reference to the effects of dummy medication in health and disease, in spite of their fundamental importance in evaluating therapeutic efficiency. It does not appear, in fact, that the statements in the book are based on scientific evidence at all, and it does not encourage the search for such evidence. This book is not therefore to be recommended.

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