PHARMACOPOEIAS AND FORMULARIES

THE PHARMACOPEIA OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA SIXTEENTH REVISION*

REVIEWED BY A. D. MACDONALD

There is something inexorable, even relentless, about Pharmacopoeias and especially in these days when they aim at a "five year period of effectiveness". U.S.P. XVI takes over from U.S.P. XV on October 1. It adds 224 new monographs, deletes 159 and advances for the first time a list of 81 Interim Admissions "for which monographs could not be completed by press time", usually because "creditable and objective standards of purity were still beyond attainment". It is hoped that monographs on these will become official by means of Supplements to U.S.P. XVI. Incidentally, these Supplements are supplied without additional charge to all who purchase the main book and return the official order form. Only 12 monographs were added by Supplement to U.S.P. XV—drugs like chlorpromazine, prednisone, prednisolone and reserpine and their preparations. Dried Torula Yeast, added in 1956, has now been deleted. Looking at the list of Interim Admissions, it is safe to predict that many more are likely to be added to the present volume. The turnover in a total of 908 monographs is very substantial and reflects the changing face and fashion of medicine today, the prodigious energy of the synthetic chemists and the manufacturers. In scanning the monographs one finds few containing more than one active ingredient —no opium or codeine compound powders—but paregoric and aromatic spirit of ammonia survive. Most monographs indicate a therapeutic Category—e.g., Antibacterial, Antinauseant, Flavoured vehicle, and both a "Usual Dose" and a "Usual Dose Range". The sub-titles do not always include those of the B.P. Abbreviations for titles are not provided. There is much more detailed information on Packaging and Storage, both in the monographs and in the General Notices, than in B.P. and B.P.C.

U.S.P. XVI is substantially thinner and lighter than B.P. 1958, but has 136 pages more. The main type is larger, the small type much smaller than in B.P. The paper resembles the cream of B.P.C. 1959 rather than the blue-white of the B.P.—experts maintain that off-white is easier on the eye. The "General Tests, Processes and Apparatus" and "Reagents, Indicators and Solutions" which we here call Appendices are printed in double column to save space—even so, they run to nearly 300 pages, even though matter such as the Assay of Digitalis is dealt with in the monograph, not in an Appendix.

Federal recognition of the standards of U.S.P. dates back only to 1906. though the book has been maintained since 1820. But this book is much more than a book of legal standards, guaranteeing the quality of therapeutic substances. It is indeed a therapeutic guide, "the soundness of

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which is tempered only by that of the judgement of those who select the articles recognised". The responsibility for this book rests upon a Revision Committee of 60 with an Executive of 10 with Dr. Lloyd C. Miller as Chairman and Director of Pharmacopeial Revision. There are 10 Sub-committees, 22 Additional Committees and 19 Advisory Panels, each dealing with a medical speciality. Tribute is paid to the increasing responsibilities and work of the chemists on these Committees. A list of 240 names of participants in the Revision who are not otherwise mentioned includes the Secretary of the B.P. Commission, Mr. T. C. Denston, and five others outside the U.S.A. It is a vast team and it has done a fine job.