

BOOK REVIEW

PHARMACOLOGY AND THERAPEUTICS. Fourth, revised and enlarged, edition. By Arthur Grollman. Pp. 1079 (including Index and 217 illustrations). Henry Kimpton, London, 1960. 93s. 6d.

The author of a text on pharmacology is faced with difficulties not of his own making. Not only must he make a selection of material on the basis of current utility in medical practice and in the laboratory, but must also consider if a compound should be retained on historical grounds, and whether a drug currently acceptable and perhaps enthusiastically received, will have been consigned to therapeutic oblivion by the time his book is in print. He has to face criticisms of not being up to date on the one hand and of including misleading information on the other. The form and emphasis of the book will depend largely upon the meaning the author gives to his definition of pharmacology, and he must face thoughtless criticism for not having written a textbook of endocrinology, of medicine, of mathematical statistics or of chemistry or biochemistry, as applied to pharmacology. As never before, pharmacology has expanded and ramified and is subdivided into separate disciplines all of which apply themselves to the study of the mode of action of drugs. With these observations in mind the reviewer must decide what sort of book the author has decided to write and read it in this light.

Dr. Grollman's fourth edition is apparently aimed primarily at medical students and medical practitioners. It is a tribute to its value and popularity that only two years have elapsed between the third and fourth editions. The book is up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive in its treatment of the subject matter, and each chapter contains a useful bibliography and a list of official preparations. The illustrations are usually very good, particularly those which show drug side effects or toxic reactions, and there are a number of useful tables which list the official names of drugs and their proprietary counterparts. Proprietary names and alternative approved (non-U.S.P.) names are given throughout the text. Some criticism must be levelled at the chemical formulae in which there are a number of minor errors and inconsistencies and at a few of the reproductions of the black and white tracings, which are poor in quality and need replacing in the next edition. The text is, however, up-to-date and comprehensive in its inclusion of data (including dosage) upon new drugs and older well-established ones, whilst the classic pharmacological laboratory tools, such as nicotine and cocaine, are also dealt with. In contrast to the two hundred or more pages which deal with hormones, vitamins, water and inorganic salts, mechanisms of action and structure-action relationships get very little space, nor are there adequate descriptions of practical methods or apparatus.

The book is well printed and bound and, unlike some of the other American texts, of an easily manageable size. There is a sixty page index, a therapeutic index and a brief appendix on prescription writing. Without doubt it will appeal strongly to medical practitioners and medical students, but science students may find the need to supplement it.

J. J. LEWIS.