

some 70 per cent of the space of the book. Despite the deletion of a long list of titles for articles that are no longer regarded as deserving of pharmacopœial recognition, the monographs section now occupies 160 pages more than in the preceding edition, mainly because of the many new monographs provided. It is scarcely possible to pick out any individual article or group of articles as having greater significance than others. Pharmacologists will certainly note, however, the return to grace of Diamorphine Hydrochloride, best known as heroin; it was last official in B.P. 1948. This admission is especially noteworthy because of the statutory ban on the distribution of heroin in many parts of the world on account of its pronounced liability to cause addiction.

The British Pharmacopœia 1963 is the third edition brought out under the direction of the present Secretary of the British Pharmacopœia Commission since he assumed office in 1951. As an addition to a notable series, it reflects great credit on the Secretary personally and the entire Secretariat; it gives evidence as well of able and unstinting help from the Commission and the many committees appointed to assist it during the revision period.

THE BRITISH PHARMACEUTICAL CODEX, 1963*

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FEW books can exist for a dual purpose and effectively fill both needs; generally either one or both of the aims suffers in such an ambitious undertaking. The British Pharmaceutical Codex is a rare exception to this generalisation, inasmuch as it has a long history of commendable service both as a compilation of highly authoritative and useful therapeutic (actions and uses) information as well as a valuable compendium of recognised and accepted standards and specifications for many pharmaceuticals and dosage forms not included in the corresponding British Pharmacopœia. The latest revision of the Codex continues in this fine tradition and the reader is pleased to note that further improvements have been made which serve to extend and increase the value and usefulness of the book.

The present volume is the eighth edition in a series dating from 1907, and is intended to become effective, in the United Kingdom on January 1, 1964. Its publication follows by only three and one-half years the appearance of the previous edition, the B.P.C. 1959. The explanation for this accelerated publication programme rests in a mutual desire on the part of the British Pharmacopœia Commission and the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain to provide a parallel publication schedule for the two books, and so enable them to come into effect on the

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PHARMACOPOEIAS AND FORMULARIES

same dates. This arrangement has certain obviously desirable features, particularly for those agents for which standards are newly included in one book and are simultaneously deleted from the other.

The general format and arrangement of the new Codex is essentially that of the previous edition, which proved to be popular and convenient to use. In number of pages, the present volume exceeds its predecessor by over 140, and this may be attributed principally to the appearance of a substantial increase in new monographs.

The section devoted to monographs on drugs is listed as Part I and dramatically emphasises the two-fold purpose of the Codex. As in the past, the monographs generally include two main sections: one headed "Standard" and the second "Actions and uses". In addition, there is generally other information relative to synonyms, storage, dose and preparations. The "Actions and uses" information is authoritative and results from the careful consideration and evaluation of each article by a panel of acknowledged medical experts. The "Standard" is a set of pharmaceutical tests and assay specifications, and is supplied for each of the monographs which is not carried in the current British Pharmacopoeia; hence the desirability of concurrent publication of the two books. A significant innovation in the Codex monograph standards is the introduction of infra-red identification procedures in a number of the monographs. This has also necessitated the establishment of a programme whereby authentic specimens of those drugs are made available on order for use as comparison standards in the new infra-red procedures.

Close examination of the individual monographs reveals a number of other changes which are more of an editorial nature, but which should be noted for the benefit of veteran users of the Codex who are familiar with the previous style. Formerly, tolerance statements were provided in a separate paragraph titled "Content" at the beginning of the Standard section; in addition, the method for quantitative determination was previously given in another paragraph titled "Assay". In the present edition, however, the two paragraphs have been merged into a single one titled "Content", which appears at the end of the section. Another editorial change has been to convert the order of the elements in the molecular formulae to correspond with that of *Chemical Abstracts*. Now, after carbon and hydrogen, all the elements are given in alphabetical order; formerly, oxygen was listed immediately after hydrogen, and then the remaining elements were given alphabetically.

Of the 818 drug monographs, over 200 are new admissions to the Codex. In addition to providing this large number of new monographs, the Codex Committee has seen to the complete revision of the remaining monographs which appeared in the 1959 volume.

As in the past, Parts II to VI include monographs on immunological products, human blood preparations, surgical sutures, surgical dressings, and formulary preparations, respectively. It seems somewhat inappropriate to classify each of these categories as a separate "Part", with the same apparent emphasis as that given to Part I. Altogether Parts II to

PHARMACOPOEIAS AND FORMULARIES

VI total only about one-half the number of pages of Part I alone. In the opinion of this reviewer, the Codex Revision Committee might well consider consolidation in the next edition of Parts II to V into a single Part with suitable sub-sections. This would appear logical from the standpoint of the relatively brief nature of each of these Parts, and also because of the close natural relationship of the topics covered. Of these, Part V, dealing with surgical dressings, has been the most extensively revised and brought up to date.

Several new and very useful formulae have been added to Part VI. Because the policy has been continued of adding new formulae only if the recipe ingredients are freely available to pharmacists, the number of new formulae is consequently limited. A notable change in the formulary section has been the major conversion of weights and measures to the metric system. While a very few preparations had been so converted in the previous edition, this change has been largely carried to near completion in the present volume.

A number of new appendices have been added bringing the present total to 22. Furthermore, a couple of the 17 appendices in the previous edition have been discontinued. Among those added are a set of methods for the examination of aerosol propellents, a system for the classification of powders, a table of standard wire gauges, and additional analytical information to aid the examination of various pharmaceutical products.

While it is not listed as an appendix, and in fact is not even part of the bound book, note should be taken here of the pamphlet titled "Names of Substances". This 16-page booklet is enclosed with the 1963 Codex, and provides a handy cross-reference of non-proprietary and trade names for all the drugs appearing as monographs in the new Codex.

In summary, it is the reviewer's considered conclusion that the 1963 B.P.C. surpasses all of its predecessors both in the quantity of material covered and in the quality of treatment. Undoubtedly, the practitioner of medicine and the practitioner of pharmacy in the United Kingdom will continue to rely upon the Codex for the most concise and reliable information on today's leading pharmaceutical products. In doing so, both the physician and the pharmacist will be able to practice their individual professions just that much more securely.