

BOOK REVIEWS

POISONING. By Jay M. Arena. Pp. xvii + 440 (including Index). Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, Ill., U.S.A., 1963. \$16.75.

The author of this book, Dr. Jay M. Arena, is clearly a man with a mission. He tells us that "when . . . a house officer in . . . Duke University Medical Center, it was my unfortunate lot to see and care for many children with acute caustic alkali poisoning". This experience evidently roused in him a horror of preventable (accidental) poisoning in young children which has been the motive for much of his work. This has lain in the field of paediatrics and poisoning plays an extraordinarily large part in child care in North America. As a result of the pressures so created, the first Poison Control Centre was organised in Chicago in 1953 and for 10 years has been collecting and analysing data concerning acute poisoning, as well as issuing information. It is on the data acquired by a service of this kind, installed in the Paediatric Department of Duke University, that this book is based. Now that Britain is taking its first officially sponsored step in the same direction with the installation of a Poison Information Centre at the Department of Forensic Medicine in Guy's Hospital, London, the content of this book is of exceptional interest.

It is divided into 11 sections, of which the most interesting is entitled "Public Safety Education" and comprises a survey of the methods of propaganda found useful to reduce the incidence of poisoning among children. Unfortunately it appears to be thought desirable to use a loose and journalistic style of presentation in this book which, in the reviewer's opinion, detracts from the weight of the views offered. This, in conjunction with the horrific dust cover, liberally decorated with skeletons and crossbones, gives an impression of undue levity. The two column format, paucity of illustration, and the inclusion of 120 pp. of close-set tables (lists of poisonous substances, etc. presumably derived from the files of the Information Centre) in the text are not attractive and the information is not likely to be very helpful in England largely because it concerns American products. A more serious criticism, perhaps, is the advocacy of gastric lavage in almost all cases when it has been repeatedly shown to be of severely limited use; the use of "universal antidote" which has been almost universally abandoned, and a number of medicaments and therapeutic procedures which have never been shown to be of real value. The author, though vastly experienced, is evidently not very critical in his choice of materials.

This book is not likely to appeal to many general practitioners in Britain, but it should prove to be a useful and interesting addition to the libraries of departments of Paediatrics and Toxicology, and a mine of information and sage advice to the discriminating reader. The index occupies no less than 80 pp. which makes easy the task of reference.

J. D. P. GRAHAM.

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A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF THE TABLETTING OF MEDICINAL SUBSTANCES. Compiled by A. J. Evans and David Train. Pp. 160 (including Index). The Pharmaceutical Press, London, 1963. 25s.

This book is a result of work carried out in the Department of Pharmaceutics and the Library of the School of Pharmacy, University of London. Everyone interested in the theories and the techniques involved in making medicinal tablets will be grateful to the compilers, the publishers and all those concerned with the project, for making this excellent bibliography generally accessible. Until this publication was issued no up-to-date and comprehensive collection of references on the subject had been available.

Presumably because of the limited number of copies so specialised a subject would require, a photolithographic method of reproduction from typescript has been adopted which has resulted in a serviceable if not very attractive format. Proof reading and typing would appear to have been very carefully done and errors are few; some apparent misprints are due to the method of reproduction used.

Within the limits set by the compilers a very comprehensive list of references has been provided and annotations have been added where the titles of the papers, or other works, do not adequately indicate their contents. The difficulties of devising a subject index have been satisfactorily overcome by a detailed classification of the material under five main headings (viz.: 1, General; 2, Tablets; 3, Tableting Practice; 4, Materials; 5, Fundamentals) and 61 subsections. In any future editions when more references are included a more detailed subject index with cross references would be helpful. As it is, any specific reference, the authorship of which is not known, may often be found in a matter of seconds, the search rarely requires more than a very few minutes. A complete author index is, of course, included.

The subject matter of the bibliography covers a number of rapidly expanding fields of investigation and practice. It is very much to be hoped that authors will persist in their expressed intention to continue the collection of references and, by the publication of supplements to this volume, keep the bibliography up to date and perhaps also widen its scope.

If, as a result of a wider circulation the publishers were able to use a more costly method of printing another edition, an invaluable bibliography might have the presentation it deserves.

D. STEPHENSON.