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INTRODUCTION TO CHEMICAL PHARMACOLOGY. Second Edition. By R. B. Barlow. Pp. viii + 452 (including Index). Methuen & Co. Ltd., London, 1964. 84s.

It is a pleasure to record that the high standard set by Dr. Barlow in the first edition of his book has been well maintained, perhaps even surpassed, in this second edition. The subject matter has been reduced in breadth, but the increased depth of treatment has lengthened the book by some 50%. It would probably be true to say that this is no longer an introduction to, but has become rather a treatise on, chemical pharmacology. The author's intention is that his book should serve primarily the interests of chemists, but it is certain to prove just as useful to the pharmacologist. The subject matter is concerned mainly within the confines of "autonomic pharmacology", with excursions into the actions of local anaesthetics and of drugs affecting histamine receptors. Throughout, Dr. Barlow has attempted to integrate the biological and chemical aspects of his subject with considerable success. There is a useful introduction to enzyme kinetics and receptor theory, both of which have been advanced in recent years to the extent of being fully comprehensible only to the specialist within the field. Although this chapter does not set out to be more than an introduction, it is a timely one. The principles of quantitative experimental methods are also surveyed briefly.

The main body of the book is devoted to relations of structure to activity in autonomic drugs. Introducing each chapter is a brief appraisal of the historical background and present concepts of physiological activity at each site—the neuromuscular junction, autonomic ganglia, postganglionic cholinergic receptors, drugs affecting cholinesterases and adrenergic receptors. In the main there is little to fault in the contents of these chapters. Some expansion of the chemical pharmacology of presynaptic events would have been desirable both for cholinergic and adrenergic nerves, because of the increasing interest in these sites. There are two other minor criticisms. The first concerns the references, which are listed alphabetically in relation to each chapter, but collected between text and appendices at the end of the book. This makes reference finding more of a trial. Either the lists should close each chapter or (less satisfactorily) there should be a single alphabetical list at the end of the book. Secondly, from the dates of the references cited the text would appear to have been some two years in appearing in print, which may reflect publishing difficulties. However, the thread of Dr. Barlow's argument loses little by either of these drawbacks. There are some books, of which each new edition is awaited with anticipation. This is one of them.

GAVIN PATERSON