

The Extra Pharmacopoeia - Martindale

25th Edition*

Edited by R. G. Todd

Reviewed by Professor A. D. Macdonald

"An authoritative reference work on drugs and medicines in current use throughout the world" is the sub-title on the cover. British reference books on drugs have a deservedly high reputation, not only in the United Kingdom. Regular revisions prevent stagnation, and even with a new B.P. and B.P.C. every five years as is today's established practice, addenda appear periodically to keep these volumes up to date. Such provision involves a vast and continuing labour and those sharing in this toil make a substantial contribution to the promulgation of standards for, and useful knowledge about, medicines. It is nine years since we had a new E.P., and this book is more comprehensive, even encyclopaedic, in its scale and outlook, compared with the B.P. and B.P.C. Yet it is produced by a small devoted team rather than by a series of working-parties, committees and sub-committees, and to this team of ten and especially to the editor, Mr. R. G. Todd, F.P.S., a tribute should be paid—they have done a magnificent job. When Martindale produced his first E.P. in 1883 his was a pocket-book of 313 pages, and he had medical help from Dr. Westcott in the shape of concise abstracts of papers from medical journals. Since the book was taken over by the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain it has grown both in size and authority. The previous ten editions appeared in two volumes. The new single-volume E.P. claims to contain 80% more material than the two-volumed edition of 1958. Yet much of the analytical and biochemical information of Volume II has had to be ruthlessly pruned—it is hoped that the lost material will appear in "Companion Volumes" and that amendments and supplements will be issued from time to time. One "Companion Volume" has already appeared.

"When in doubt, see what the E.P. has to say" is good practice. Professor Witts has called Martindale "a great contribution to medical science and scholarship—regarded with affection by all who use it". The B.P. and the Codex hardly inspire affection. But the E.P. is basically "Extra" in that it deals with many drugs which no longer qualify for inclusion in the B.P. or B.P.C., and with a few which may be in course of qualifying. Thus Part 2 of the book has in 67 pages short notes on 600 preparations, in alphabetical order, in these categories. One finds here "old, forgotten, far-off things" like rosemary and rue. But here too are notes and recent references to dopa and dopamine, to etorphine (M.99) and the various related analgesics and antagonists, to recent introductions such as "Ponstan" and "Extil". Part 3 (pp. 46) offers the formulae for 1,600 proprietaries advertised to the public and usually supplied over the counter on demand—an increase of 600 over the 24th edition. These are introduced by reminders about the law on advertising proprietaries and the advice given by the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain to its members on what not to supply without a prescription. There follow a "Directory of Manufacturers", an "Index to Clinical Uses" (about which some may have reservations—it covers everything from "Hair—to remove" to "Hepatic Coma"—with references to the appropriate page in the text) and finally a monumental "General Index"—164

* pp. xxviii + 1804 (including index). The Pharmaceutical Press, London, 1967. 150s. (postage: 4s. 6d.)

pages with three columns to a page. This index adds up to some 32,000 entries. So far it has not failed any test applied.

Most of this is very good and very useful, but the cream of the E.P. is found in Part 1. Here in 1498 pages are monographs on 2,600 substances—concentrated information, no frills, little history, arranged in 169 “chapters”. Most chapters deal with groups of pharmacologically-related drugs and vary in length—132 pages on “Penicillin and other antibiotics”, 28 on “Adrenaline and other sympathomimetics”, 28 on “Morphine and other analgesics”, 6 on “Alcohol”—including benzyl, isopropyl, methyl, methylated and proof spirits, 5 on “Oxygen and other gases” and so on. Chapters are separated by cross-column headings which may come anywhere on a page, drugs by a line. Pages are about 50% bigger than in the earlier editions—margins are narrow—paper tough but thin—two columns and about 1250 words to a page. There is certainly no wasted space, no “vain repetitions” and even the small type used for abstracts is clear. There are over 10,000 references and abstracts, mostly since 1958. 1,200 new drugs and 2,400 new proprietaries have been added in the present revision. Inevitably, much of the old has gone—it is no good looking for Barger on ergot or Dale on amines and one may sigh over the loss of such classics. But this is a book of first things, first, and the necessary pharmaceutical, pharmacological and therapeutic facts are set out concisely, with these recent abstracts to expand and illustrate and provide for more study in depth.

My copy suffers from some blurring of part of the printing of the monograph on phenelzine and this word is misspelled on p. 1045 but, so far as my perusal of about one-fifth of this text goes, the proof-reading and the production have been meticulous. To consider in detail such chapters as are of special interest to oneself might be unfair to the fields so far unexplored. The price of 150s. may provoke comment—it represents about 12,000 words for each shilling, and this is unusual value!

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