

Book Reviews

Drugs, Their Nature, Action and Use, by Harry Beckmann, Director, Department of Pharmacology, Marquette University Schools of Medicine and Dentistry. W. B. Saunders Company, Philadelphia and London, 1958. xvii and 729 pp., 25 × 17·5 cm, 126 figures. \$15.00.

This new textbook of pharmacology is addressed to the 'undergraduate' medical student, and after reading the first sixty pages one is convinced that the author has a very unsophisticated medical student in mind, perhaps the future country doctor. The reader is addressed in a personal, enthusiastic, colourful and folksy way; one feels that no special medical preparation is needed to be introduced into this presentation of pharmacology. In contrast to other contemporary texts on this subject, the biochemical and theoretical background is not stressed, and the author indeed confesses that when 'he had the privilege of attending a symposium (on absorption) in 1955 he came away rather bewildered by the formulae and explanations'. While this reviewer doubts whether this book will induce a medical student to specialize in modern pharmacology, some encouraging remarks in Chapter 1 notwithstanding, the future practitioner will welcome the eminently practical and well-arranged data on the drugs he will prescribe to his patients. The practising physician will enjoy the book as a handy reference work where, unencumbered by passing hypotheses, he will quickly find dosages, modes of administration, an account of the conditions for which the drug may be used, and side-effects to be on guard against.

The book leans heavily on the physiological side of pharmacology, and this again will be helpful to the general practitioner. There are some inaccuracies in the introductory chapters, some omissions of widely used drugs, as, for example, in the group of haemostats, and some of the most recent psychopharmacological agents have been treated too lightly. But on the whole, the book teaches practical pharmacology, and offers enough background information to enable the young medical student and independent physician to understand, if he wishes, the additional information obtainable from the good and adequate bibliographies of the seventy-six chapters.

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Current Drug Handbook, by Mary W. Falconer, Instructor in Pharmacology, and H. Robert Patterson, Associate Professor of Bacteriology and Biology, San Jose State College and O'Connor Hospital, San Jose, California. W. B. Saunders Co., Philadelphia and London, 1958. viii and 157 pp., 15 × 23.5 cm. \$3.25.

This book contains specific data on approximately 1,000 older and newer drugs and active principles in current use. Drugs are arranged in tabular form according to their therapeutic or pharmacological categories, with a few exceptions as given in the *U.S. Pharmacopeia XV*. An alphabetical index is also available. Non-proprietary, secondary and many proprietary drug names are listed, together with their uses, toxic symptoms and the usual treatment for poisoning. These data are followed by metric and apothecary dosages, the mode of administration, contra-indicators, incompatibilities, and specific problems.

Among the drugs listed are antiseptics and disinfectants, anti-infectives, biologicals, drugs affecting the autonomic, central and peripheral nervous systems, histamine-like and antihistaminic drugs, drugs affecting the circulatory and gastro-intestinal systems, metabolic, diagnostic drugs, drugs acting on the respiratory and on the urinary systems, and various types of miscellaneous drugs including tranquilizers and muscle relaxants.

Great accuracy prevails in these data, and pharmacists, biologists and physicians alike will find these tables an invaluable source of rapid and reliable information. A yearly revision of the data is anticipated.

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