Book Reviews


This monograph includes the formal papers of thirty-three investigations from twelve countries presented at a conference on the chemotherapy of Burkitt’s lymphoma convened by the Chemotherapy Panel of the International Union against Cancer (UICC) in Kampala, Uganda in January 1966.

The monograph is outstanding for its broad coverage of the natural history and epidemiology of the disease, in addition to an excellent description of its clinical characteristics and its response to effective chemotherapy. The possibility of infectious etiology (based on epidemiologic, immunologic and virus morphologic observations) resulted in the participation in the conference by leaders in these areas of cancer research. In addition, the comparatively high effective response rate of patients to chemotherapeutic agents brought outstanding clinical and experimental cancer chemotherapists into the formal program. As a result of their participation, the monograph contains the best of both the practical and the theoretical modern approaches to the drug treatment of cancer.

Since Burkitt’s tumor is not limited to near-equatorial Africa, but has been reported from widely separated areas in the world, and the natural disease offers much of interest to virologists, immunologists, epidemiologists, and chemotherapeutists in addition to clinicians, this monograph should be of value to all investigators and practicing physicians concerned with cancer.

The book is well and carefully edited. In addition, it is a fine example of the best of the printer’s art with outstanding tables and figures.

F. M. Schabel, Jr., Birmingham, Ala.


This is a review of the important proprietary drugs marketed in Great Britain. In this fourth edition, the structure of the text has remained unchanged. As far as possible, each product is presented giving a description of the agent or its composition, pharmacological data, indications and contra-indications, side-effects or toxicity, dosage, mode of application, and presentation. As the publishers point out, the descriptions of many of the preparations presented have been amended where dosage has changed, side-effects have been observed, or packaging and presentation altered.

All of this authoritative information, the volume of which is exceedingly large and, thanks to the excellent arrangement of the text, is readily accessible to the reader seeking advice. It is presented in precise and easily understandable writing. This fourth edition will keep the physician well informed on the present-day advances in the development of pharmaceutics.

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In a first appendix, the manufacturers referred to and their addresses are listed, and in the second appendix a condition index is presented naming the drugs appropriate for treating a given condition.


Volume 2 of Topics in Medicinal Chemistry contains ten papers on subjects of interest to medical scientists, students and clinicians. The topics covered in this volume include diuretics, biogenic amines, phenothiazines, drugs affecting coagulation, agents used in alcoholism, oral anti-diabetic agents, and anti-inflammatory drugs. Chapters on host-parasite interaction, clinical drug testing and computer applications in medicinal chemistry are also included. The editors state that it is the purpose of the book to digest the vast amount of research material produced in recent years and to present it in a composite, brief, and explicit form. The editors also hope to ‘make this information available to the clinician in a practical form, thus helping to bridge the gap between basic research and the patient’. The editors and the authors of the individual papers seem to have done extremely well in meeting their goals. In fact, they have done so well that they have perhaps limited their audience to those people who are reasonably uninitiated in the areas discussed.

The title of this volume appears to be a misnomer as the general approach is clinically and pharmacologically oriented. Much of what this reviewer thinks of as medicinal chemistry and many of the advances in this field relating to the physical-chemical properties of drug are omitted. The first paper, which deals with diuretic agents, is well written and comes closest to dealing with the medicinal chemistry of the drugs described than any topic covered in the book. The paper on oral anti-diabetic agents is also very informative as the author has covered his topic from a number of angles.

On the whole, the authors are to be congratulated on the clarity of their writing and the tightness of the manuscripts. Every paper is extremely well-referenced. The book will be of use to clinicians, to medical and pharmacy students, and to those medical scientists desiring a general picture of the pharmacology and clinical application of the drug discussed. E. R. Garrett and G. Yakatan, Gainsville, FL Waksman, S. A. (ed.): Actinomycin. Nature, Formation, and Activities. Wiley, New York/London/Sydney 1968. 231 p. Price: 84 s.

Since its isolation from a culture of Streptomyces antibioticus in 1940 by Waksman and Woodruff, actinomycin has come to attain a firm place in the armamentarium of the cancer chemotherapist and immunotherapist, and as a basic tool in the laboratory of the biochemist and molecular biologist, although, as an antibiotic, it does not enjoy any use in the treatment of infectious diseases. It is thus fitting that the various properties and applications of this agent be summarized in a single volume by those most intimately related to its development and application.

Eleven chapters are devoted to its historical development [Waksman], production and isolation [Woodruff and Waksman], chemistry [Johnson], biogenesis [Katz], pharmacology [Schwartz, Sternberg, and Philips], action in cellular differentiation [Gross], in experimental [Hackmann] and clinical oncology [Farber and Mitus; Karnofsky], and in the process of immunosuppression
[Tannenberg and Schwartz]. An Appendix to this book reproduces the AMA evaluation of actinomycin D (Dactinomycin, Cosmegen) as an antineoplastic agent, followed by a bibliography for all of the presentations.

As a whole, this short book provides a broad background for actinomycin therapy. It is of course not the intention of this volume to cover all aspects of the extensive literature that has accumulated on this substance, yet one would expect that the subject chosen for review in any particular chapter be elucidated in detail and be up-to-date. This is not the case in Hackmann’s chapter on ‘Action of actinomycin in experimental tumors’, which considers the literature only superficially and, moreover, only to about 1960. A repetition of certain subjects, particularly of actinomycin’s mechanism of action, does take place. Most chapters, however, do accomplish their goals quite admirably. This book can be recommended to those seeking an account on the development of this agent and on its current clinical uses.

D. M. Goldenberg, Pittsburgh, PA


The sixth volume of Advances in Pharmacology is different from the preceding volumes in that it does not present the usual compilation of selected monographs and reviews in a variety of important areas of pharmacology. Rather, it is the publication of the proceedings of the ‘Symposium on the Biological Role of Indolealkylamines Derivatives.’ As such, it is concerned with diverse and important questions such as the synthesis of melatonin, the production, distribution, and location of serotonin, the role of 5-hydroxytryptamine, 5-hydroxyindoleacetic acid, and other compounds in neuroassertations, and a number of other extremely important and pertinent topics in biochemistry and biochemical pharmacology.

The book itself, however, is composed of a series of short papers which are generally detailed research papers concerning specific limited areas of the subject. The papers are concerned with the biochemistry, distribution, and probable biological functions of the indolealkylamines. The work is not a review, but a series of reports on recent advances in diverse areas. Although it is well edited by Garattini and Shore, and although there is a consistency of format throughout, the style of each paper varies, and the breadth or narrowness of each similarly vary greatly. The works do represent an extensive compilation of recent data by outstanding researchers in this area. They are generally scientifically excellent, the bibliographies are good, and the individual reports are clear, concise, and extremely well illustrated. Biology, physiology, and biochemistry are well surveyed in relation to this important series of compounds and this work brings together most of the new knowledge available about this extremely important group of substances.

In summary, this is an excellent volume devoted to the biology and biochemistry of the indolealkylamines. Although its scope is limited and it is presented primarily as a series of research reports for workers particularly interested in the biology of these substances, it is a most important contribution.

H. E. Kaufmann, Gainesville, FL


This volume contains the ‘Precedings of the Seventh Interscience Conference on Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy’, held in Chicago, Ill. in October 1967.
The first chapter ‘Regulation of Clinical Investigation’, is extremely interesting for the clinical pharmacologist. The viewpoints of the clinician, of industry and of government agencies are discussed. The chapter, ‘Infectious Diseases’ contains a large amount of new experimental and clinical results. A round-table conference is devoted to the problem of ‘Optimal Duration of Antibiotic Therapy in Severe Bacterial Infections’ (pyelonephritis, meningitis, endocarditis, pneumonia, gastroenteritis).

The three following sections are of a theoretical nature: ‘Antibiotic Synergism and Antagonism’, ‘Mode of Action of Antimicrobial Agents’ and ‘Relation of Chemical Structure to Mechanism of Antibiotic Action’. The two following chapters may be considered as a look into the future development of chemotherapy (‘New Antibiotics’, ‘Chemistry of Antibiotics’, and ‘Synthetic Antimicrobial Agents’). One entire section is devoted to the new penicillins and cephalosporins. Finally, seven papers are presented dealing with side effects and pharmacokinetic problems. The book is highly recommended, not only to the specialist in the clinic and in the laboratory but also to all physicians who wish to be informed on the latest trends and possibilities of chemotherapy. Dettli, Basle


This booklet is one of a series entitled ‘A New Look at Medicine’. Only thus can its title be understood as the reviewer was, with the best of intentions, unable to find a genuine ‘new look’. Naturally, this does not mean that the book does not consider the results of the most recent research. However, what are important are the statistical data on infectious diseases in Great Britain (and elsewhere) and the details in the last chapter on the duties of Government Authorities and the individual in the fight against infectious diseases are also interesting.

This booklet by Alston is not so much intended for the specialist in the field of chemotherapy as for the medical layman who, because of personal interest or for professional reasons, is occupied with questions of infectious diseases.

H. Schönfeld, Graz