BOOK REVIEWS


The British Pharmacopoeia Commission are to be congratulated on the production of this new, ninth edition of the Pharmacopoeia, published under the direction of the General Medical Council by the Pharmaceutical Press, which is official from September 1, 1958. Its preparation, taking into account the rapid development of the many new synthetic and biological substances which have been introduced since the last edition, is a formidable task, because the selection of appropriate substances for inclusion, requires considerable thought and judgment.

The members of the Commission, with their special knowledge in this sphere, ensure a high standard for this issue. It can be confidently recommended to all who need to refer to this admirably produced volume.


This book evaluates the effects of four different techniques for treating alcoholism, a disease stated here to number 5 million victims in the U.S.A. and to be more untreatable than schizophrenia. In a Veterans Administration Hospital at Topeka, Kansas, 178 patients were given a three months’ course with one of 4 different treatments, (1) antabuse, (2) group hypnotherapy, (3) psychoanalytically orientated group therapy, and (4) conditioned reflex (emetine) therapy. The percentage of improvement for the 4 techniques were respectively 53, 36, 26 and 24. The patients were subjected before, during and after treatment to Szondi psychological tests.

The editor seeks to evaluate for which type of patient one or other treatment is indicated or contra-indicated. This is, however, the most debatable part of the study. Despite the rather lukewarm approval accorded to antabuse, these results are likely to lead to a wider use of the drug or perhaps of some less toxic successor to it. This well-planned work, sponsored by Gardner Murphy and Karl Menninger, should be read by every worker in this field.


This volume bears comparison with its distinguished predecessors. Its publication is timely, for there are some 14 million Americans of 65 and over and that number will have doubled in the next forty-five years. 6 out of 15 chapters are devoted to pathological changes in the brain and its blood vessels. Lancing, Weiss, Himwich, Kety, Andrew and Foley contribute in their special fields. The following are among some of the questions discussed: How far does heredity control the onset and severity of senility? Is there a phenomenon corresponding to Gowers’ concept of abiotrophy or is senescence caused by toxic agents? Do some “senile” changes in the brain represent a defence reaction to such noxae? How far are senile changes caused by vascular disease, and can “the bad plumbing” be prevented or improved? How far is senility accompanied by diminished oxidation of the brain cells? How far do those verging on 70 lose their “intelligence”?

These and many other questions are discussed with the aid of numerous tables, diagrams and illustrations. Pope has shown that senescence can be retarded in mammals (the rat) by uniting the older animal with a young one by means of a plastic operation. Clinicians too made notable contributions. Houston Merritt summed up well in several discussions, and Macdonald Critchley, the only English speaker, gave a comprehensive account of the clinical neurological aspects. A symposium on treatment showed how much can be done for old people despite the rather fatalistic attitude that too often prevails.


This volume records the proceedings of the 5th Congress on the Protides of Biological Fluids held in Bruges in 1957 and is mainly concerned with electrophoresis of the body.