

Book reviews

Year Book of Dermatology - 1972.

Edited by FREDERICK D. MALKINSON and R. W. PEARSON. Pp. 416, 68 figs. Year Book Medical Publishers, Chicago; Lloyd Luke Medical Books, London (£6.80)

This moderately-sized volume belies its appearance as it contains no less than 416 pages on glossy paper and some 68 black and white figures. Compiled by two Professors in Dermatology at the Rush-Presbyterian-St. Luke's Medical Centre in Chicago, it reviews in some detail the latest papers in this advancing subject and presents a selected reference list or a bibliography with tables at the end of each chapter. The abstracts are well done, individually occupying about three-quarters of a page, and the work commences with a rewarding general paper (with 117 references) by Professor Malkinson himself (who is also a Research Associate at the University of Chicago) on epidermal cell kinetics and the implications in skin disease and therapy, which sets the tone for abstracts which follow.

This is essentially a book for the dermatologist—and to be just its title does not claim otherwise. Venereal diseases receive only slight attention, with ten pages in the chapter concerned containing only eleven if excellent abstracts, all but two concerned with syphilis. There follows a list of 29 recommended papers. Of the total forty papers mentioned it would appear that eleven were written by British authors and nineteen published in the *British Journal of Venereal Diseases*.

The book unconsciously stresses the reasons why dermatology and venereology became separate specialties in Great Britain. As dermatologists are traditionally interested in syphilis rather than gonorrhoea and genital discharges, the reader is not surprised to find a total lack of papers referring to non-gonococcal urethritis, trichomoniasis, and gonorrhoea—apart from one on the latter referring to its treatment interfering with or aborting incubating syphilis. He is, however, disappointed that, although there is one abstract on genital warts, the skin-affecting sexually transmitted conditions of soft sore, lymphogranuloma venereum, granuloma inguinale, scabies, pediculosis, and molluscum contagiosum have received not just scant mention but no mention at all. Herpes simplex is the subject of a number of scattered abstracts which relate particularly to cervical cytology, neonatal infection, and the establishment of Type 2 infection in monkeys. But even candidiasis merits only one abstract, concerning the subject that chronic oral infection may induce cancer.

The editors of such a book can only draw on the material available which will necessarily vary in scope from year to year. It is likely, too, that there are fewer high-

powered immunological and biochemical investigations to report on say pediculosis than on pemphigus or psoriasis. The reviewer certainly has no reason not to consider it a very valuable book for the dermatologist, but the venereologist, at any rate, will gain little from the volume for 1972 and—if he is a subscriber to this Journal—even less.

R. R. Willcox

Venereal Diseases. By R. S. MORTON, 2nd ed., 1972. Pp. 187, 9 figs. Penguin Books, Harmondsworth (35p)

This is the second edition of Dr. Morton's excellent and popular Penguin book on the sexually transmitted diseases. It has been translated into several foreign languages, including French and German, and has a world-wide distribution. The new edition has been brought up to date by the addition of recent statistics on the incidence of diseases throughout the world, and lively and accurate accounts of new research and changing attitudes. The clinical and scientific descriptions remain largely unchanged, but the sections dealing with social factors, epidemiology, and prevention have been largely re-written to bring them into line with the situation prevailing in the 1970s.

Dr. Morton writes in a clear, concise, and forthright manner. He writes for the general reader and everything he says should be understandable by the moderately intelligent members of modern western society. But, who does, in fact, buy and read a book of this type? Is it bought only by those who are already aware of the problem, the relatively small, regular book-reading section of the community, and the minute intellectual groups associated with universities and other centres of higher education? Or is it bought on impulse at railway stations, in super markets, in stationers' shops, and in larger book shops by the more sexually active and younger members of the community? Market research of this type might produce valuable information which could be helpful in planning further health education of the public in this important field.

Meanwhile the public have available an excellent and accurate account of the diseases related to sexual activity. Specialists in the field, other doctors, school teachers, and health educators can recommend it without reservation to all those who wish to have details of the venereal diseases and the social factors associated with their recent resurgence, and the majority of members of the medical and paramedical professions could benefit by reading the sections on epidemiology and prevention.

R. D. Catterall