Book reviews

Penicillin in the Treatment of Syphilis. The Experience of Three Decades. By O. IDSØE, T. GUTHE, and R. R. WILLCOX. 1972. Pp. 68. Supplement to the *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* (1972), vol. 47 (£1.20).

Thirty years have now passed since Mahoney and his colleagues first reported on the use of penicillin in the treatment of early syphilis. The authors, with the collaboration of a distinguished team of investigators, have written a monograph which takes stock of the long-term results of treatment. The chemistry of penicillin, its mode of action, the principles and aims of treatment, and suitable schedules of treatment are discussed at length. Adverse reactions to penicillin and their immunological basis are dealt with in detail. Other antibiotics, which can be used when penicillin is contraindicated, are described and their side-effects discussed. An analysis of reports from the literature on 1,435 patients treated by these alternative methods is presented.

The results of treatment with penicillin of 5,640 patients with early syphilis and of 8,819 patients with late latent or late symptomatic syphilis are tabulated. These are taken from reports selected from the literature which satisfied the authors' criteria of completeness, comparability, and adequate duration of observation after treatment. These results fully justify the faith which we have come to place in penicillin.

The authors are to be congratulated on having produced a very useful and informative digest of the treatment of syphilis which is not readily available elsewhere. Venereologists will find it a helpful guide to the literature; the size of this can be judged from the bibliography, which contains some 630 references to the world literature. This inexpensive monograph should certainly be available in all departmental libraries. *A. E. Wilkinson*

Venereal Diseases—Treatment and Nursing. By HAZEL ELLIOTT and KURT RYZ. 1972. Pp. 115, 16 figs, 1 col. pl. Patient Care Series, Baillière Tindall, London (£1.80).

A book written by nurses, which will enlighten our general nursing colleagues on the subject of venereology, is long overdue. This is such a book and will certainly be of value to the profession as a whole.

The introductory chapter, aptly named 'A Challenge', clearly outlines the reasons for the increase in the sexually transmitted diseases.

This is followed by 'Social and Psychological Problems', with sections on unmarried mothers, teenagers, homosexuals, venereophobia, and legal questions. This chapter also stresses the importance of contact tracing and describes the methods used.

There follows a brief but adequate chapter on the male and female reproductive systems which includes some very good diagrams.

The next four chapters are devoted to the diseases seen in the clinics. Signs, symptoms, and treatments are well described, each section ending with 'questions asked by patients'. This gives a guide to the stock enquiries made by patients, and forms a basis on which suitable answers may be prepared.

The section on gonorrhoea describes signs and symptoms of the uncomplicated disease for men and women, but the complications are dealt with collectively. This may prove confusing to junior nurses. It is remarked that 40 per cent. of women suffering from gonorrhoea are asymptomatic (page 45); this may be true, but it should have been stressed that only 20 per cent. attend because of symptoms.

Although the standards of accuracy on the whole are good, there are a few errors, and some statements need clarifying. On page 25 it is stated that yaws, bejel, and pinta are usually sexually transmitted. The next paragraph, under the heading incidence of syphilis, states that the incidence of syphilis has risen again since 1959 and has remained consistently high. I should have thought it worth mentioning that the incidence of the disease in the United Kingdom is *not* high, and that it seems to be well controlled. The opening paragraph in the chapter on trichomoniasis states that men are symptom free, yet on the next page the occurrence of urethral discharge is mentioned. On pages 58 and 59 the differences between non-gonococcal and non-specific urethritis are not defined. On page 90 it is stated that haematuria will probably occur after the dilatation of strictures; one would hope that this is the exception rather than the rule.

An important chapter on 'Trolleys, Trays, and Procedures' emphasizes the supportive role of nurses in the matter of patient comfort, such as warming the speculum, good positioning, explanation, and reassurance.

The book concludes with a chapter on 'Laboratory Techniques', which contains a simple explanation of the use of the microscope, descriptions of culture media and diagnostic tests, and a helpful colour plate on Gram-staining.