Book reviews

Influenza: Virus, Vaccines, and Strategy. Edited by Philip Selby. (Pp. 354; £9.00/\$19.75). Academic Press: London. 1976.

The story of influenza virus, its characterisation, its epidemiology and its prevention has certain parallels with voyages of ancient sailors through Scylla and Charybdis as there are apparently insurmountable problems in both situations. The saga of influenza is simply and fully described by many of the leading workers in the field in this book. It deals in a logical way with all major aspects of influenza virology starting with an introduction on influenza epidemiology, followed by surveillance and early detection, pathogenesis, structure and replication, prevention and control, and finally, important Public Health issues.

The advantage of this book is that it puts within one cover the whole subject in a simple way; it is necessary for example, in the understanding of the problems of chemotherapy to know the rudiments of viral replication. Similarly, to understand the many problems of vaccine production one must also comprehend the intricacies of antigenic variation.

Those involved in occupational health must at times feel impatient at the inadequacies of the present preventative measures and although this book does not supply an answer it gives us guidance in the use of the latest vaccines, such as the sub-unit variety and the reasons for its diminished toxicity compared with the whole virus vaccine. The problem of live vaccine is clarified and what seems an extraordinarily long delay between the appearance of a new influenza variant and the availability of an effective vaccine, is explained. One can sympathise with the major problems every vaccine manufacturer must face and one wonders why they persevere. Perhaps it is the challenge to attain the unattainable of complete prevention that is the inspiration and which is covered in the final chapters of the book. The economics of prevention is discussed based on 50% to 70% vaccine effectiveness; the latter figure is approximately the

best that one can expect to achieve at the present time. There also must be a vaccination policy for inter-epidemic years when it will be difficult to justify general vaccination and when it should be confined to high risk groups. A section of the book is devoted to vaccination of the elderly but only brief reference is made to vaccination of children, who are the main source of virus in an epidemic and who are also more susceptible to the toxic reactions of vaccine.

The book has certain weaknesses such as a tendency to repetition which is inevitable with multiple authorship, although it has the advantage that each section can be read as an entity. The book too, does not hesitate to speculate, as in the chapter on prospective vaccines, or to bring us down to earth in the chapter on pathogenesis where the deficiencies in our knowledge are highlighted.

This book can be confidently recommended to a wide range of people from virologists and public health groups to community physicians and general practitioners not only for its up-to-date survey of current knowledge but also to bring terms such as 'antigenic drift' and 'antigenic shift' into everyday conversation.

P. S. GARDNER

Approaches to the Validation of Manipulation Therapy. Edited by A. A. Buerger and J. S. Tobis. (Pp. 329; \$17.50). Charles C. Thomas: Illinois. 1977.

This book is a record of the Proceedings of an International Conference at the University of California in September 1975.

In their introduction the editors say that although manipulation for back pain has been used for many centuries, no method for the appraisal of the therapeutic effect of manipulation has been widely accepted by a majority of the interested basic and clinical scientists. Furthermore, with some noteworthy exceptions, relatively few carefully organised attempts

have been made to assess the available methods. In addition, the mechanisms which might be responsible for the continuing use of manipulation are not clear. The problem is further bedevilled by the fact that it has been estimated that 70-80% of attacks of low back pain clear up spontaneously.

The book consists of papers by different authors and is divided into three sections.

The first, an introduction to back pain, contains two particularly interesting chapters, one by Nachemson on a critical look at different types of treatment, the other by Finneson which is a summary of the clinical approaches to back pain.

In the second, Glover describes a syndrome of back pain and hyperaesthesia occurring after rotational strains in industry, and for those interested in electromyography Upton contributes an instructive chapter on its use in the investigation of patients with pain referred to the lower limbs.

The third, to this reviewer the most interesting section, includes an historical perspective of manipulative therapy by Lomax; a comparison of allopathic and chiropractic treatment by Wooley and Kane, in which the results were equally good and the chiropractors were significantly better only in their ability to explain the problem and its treatment to the patients and also to make them feel more welcome; and trials of manipulative treatment in general practice by Fisk, in industrial medicine by Glover *et al.*, and in hospital practice by Newell. These show that, although manipulation was no more successful than other treatments, it has its place, it is most likely to be successful if used early and there seems to be no advantage in continuing it for long. The greatest problem is to decide which cases of low back pain are most likely to benefit from manipulation. Buerger contributes a useful chapter on how effective clinical trials of manipulation could be set up.

As inevitably happens in a book written by a number of authors, the standard of writing and readability are very variable. It is certainly not a book to read right