

Clinical Chemistry

by R. Richterich and J. P. Colombo
Wiley; Chichester, New York, 1981
xxiv + 766 pages. £31.50

British books on clinical biochemistry tend to concentrate on methodology with little interpretation (Clinical Chemistry) or to discuss biochemical pathophysiology without analytical details (Chemical Pathology). This book is the English-language version of the 4th (1978) edition of a popular Swiss textbook (in German), and aims to cover, according to the title-page, 'Theory, Practice, and Interpretation'. Professor Colombo took over the editorship from the late Professor Richterich and has written the book with a number of local collaborators.

The initial one-third of the book deals with general clinical chemistry, namely matters applicable to any analysis. Much of this part is excellent, particularly those chapters which deal with laboratory statistics and sample handling. Of the sections on instrumentation, that on automation is insufficiently detailed as a guide to large laboratories: in a comprehensive book the reader should expect much more information on, e.g., relative costs and precision of the different types of equipment. There is unfortunately no discussion of the important related topics of false positives and false negatives, specificity and sensitivity, and predictive values. The chapter on laboratory design (including safety) is so short that it could well have been omitted.

The major part of the book is somewhat arbitrarily

divided into Metabolic investigations (e.g., enzymes, electrolytes) and Organ-specific investigations (e.g., liver, endocrine glands). In each chapter there are sections on basic physiological chemistry, theory and detailed description of methodologies, and diagnostic significance. The methodology, though usually thorough (there are a few exceptions, such as calcium; and there are not nearly enough drug methods), is inevitably not always up-to-date. Some of the diagnostic sections are incomplete. There are useful appendices, especially on buffer solutions and on SI conversions.

This book, which is clearly written with excellent tables and figures, provides a valuable compendium of current practice in Switzerland and is especially useful for its references to the important German-language literature that is so often neglected in English-language books. On this account a large laboratory should find a place for it, but the book is not a necessary purchase for the individual clinical biochemist. It is still better to use separate books, of which there are several excellent ones available in both categories, for clinical chemistry and for chemical pathology.

D. N. Baron

Coordination Compounds of Porphyrins and Phthalocyanins

by B. D. Berezin, translated by V. G. Vopian
Wiley; Brisbane, Chichester, New York, Toronto, 1978 (Russian text); 1981 (English translation)
xiv + 286 pages. £19.15

Among the many advances reported in the chemistry of porphyrins, phthalocyanins and related compounds during the last two decades, there have been

many contributions from the Soviet Union. The Russian papers are not always readily accessible to Western readers, and there are frequently delays in