

Book Review

A Laboratory Manual for Rural Tropical Hospitals, by Monica Cheesborough a. McArthur. *Churchill Livingstone*, Edinburgh, London and New York, 1976. Price in the £2.50.

This very important book is described as a basis for Training Courses, but it is more than that. In the field of leprosy there are hundreds of laboratory technicians working in rural centres, either on their own or in small groups, and called upon to undertake a range of laboratory work including large numbers of procedures directly relative to leprosy. Here is a highly up-to-date and comprehensive manual for such workers, clearly written, and giving precise instructions, and published at a very reasonable price, which includes the innovation of a set of transparencies and folding viewer conveniently contained in a pocket in the back cover.

The range of laboratory procedures demanded nowadays of the technician is enormous, and the whole book, in covering this, is necessarily concise and sometimes brief.

The worker in leprosy will find his needs very well covered, but pressure for space has prevented some elaboration of details which one has found in practice do need emphasis.

One of these relates to the staining tank method for staining leprosy smears in bulk. This method deserves mention, with the caution that staining solutions need frequent renewal. Indeed, written for the worker in the tropics, the effects of evaporation on the concentration of staining and other laboratory fluids needs frequent emphasis.

Some elaboration on the technique of nasal smears would also have benefitted the leprosy worker, with added emphasis on nasal discharge as a useful and extremely simple source of examination material provided that smears are made from purulent or slightly sanguineous areas. The internal examination of the nose really calls for specialist training, as the inferior turbinate is often a richer source of bacilli than the septum, especially in early lepromatous leprosy.

Some expansion of the chapter on fungal infections would also be invaluable.

Any laboratory at a leprosy centre would be enriched by having this book available for reference.

T. F. DAVEY