Reviews of Recent Books

Vitamins and Hormones. Advances in Research and Applications, Vol. XIII, edited by R. S. Harris, G. F. Marrian, and K. V. Thimann, Academic Press Inc., New York, 1955, pp. 382, $9.00.

As we said in a review of the preceding volume of this annual publication (AM. J. CLIN. NUTRITION 3: 432, 1955), "this is another in what has become an outstanding series of survey articles." The current issue is particularly valuable to investigators in the nutritional sciences. Among the subjects, all written by active workers, are the role of vitamins in antibody production, the physiology of the essential fatty acids, the chemotherapeutic action of vitamin B_{12}, and the relationship between nutrition and parasitic infection.

It would be difficult to single out any of the nine presentations for special comment, but the reviewer cannot refrain from especially praising L. B. Pett's clear and thoughtful essay on vitamin requirements of humans. The introduction, "The Illusion of Vitamin Requirements," should be required reading for everyone.

An equally outstanding review, O. Hechter's "Concerning Possible Mechanisms of Hormone Action," is a model of scientific reasoning and attractive communication.

That there is a need for surveys of this type is confirmed by the continued success of the series. It is more difficult to assess the benefits which accrue to the scientific reader. In my opinion, the benefits are great indeed. If any change is contemplated at all, it should be in the direction of encouraging speculation and interpretation, as illustrated so well in several articles in this volume. S. O. W.

Ion Exchange and Adsorption Agents in Medicine—The Concept of Intestinal Bionomics, by Gustav J. Martin, Little, Brown and Co., Boston-Toronto, 1955, pp. 333, $7.50.

In the first portion of this book the author deals with the fundamental physical and chemical characteristics of ion exchange materials. The explanation of variations in action of these exchanges depending upon changes in physical and chemical properties is both enlightening and interesting. The author then advances into the fields of the physiologic and therapeutic application of these substances. In these chapters the reader may find the opinions and conclusions of the author more difficult to accept. In the author's own series of 100 patients with peptic ulcer treated with anion exchange resins, less than two-thirds were benefited by the treatment. Certainly this is not a sufficiently striking "therapeutic triumph" to warrant the statement that "the anion exchange resins represent the agent of choice in the treatment of peptic ulcer." Indeed, this reviewer knows of no gastroenterologist who is employing these agents in the treatment of peptic ulcer at this time (and I allude to several whose favorable reports are included in the text.)

The section on cation exchange resins outlines the therapeutic indications for these substances, as well as results of their clinical application. Again, it is the opinion of the reviewer that these exchangers are rarely used. Although formerly widely employed in the treatment of edema, ascites, and certain abnormalities of electrolyte balance, the use of exchange resins in these conditions has been almost completely abandoned.

The next section of the book is a brief consideration of the chemistry and medical applications of nonresinous ion exchange and adsorption materials such as charcoal, kaolin, magnesium trisilicate, cellulose derivatives, etc. In addition to a discussion of their uses and limitations, the author points out the need for more adequate investigation of these widely used substances.

Finally, the author propounds his concept of intestinal bionomics. It is the author's contention "that all degenerative disease has as an important component in its etiology—the absorption from the intestine of small quantities of toxic chemicals." Since no evidence for this theory is given, no comment is needed.

The reviewer feels that the better portions of this book are concerned with the physical-chemical properties of exchange materials and their mechanisms of action. The clinical reviews may serve as a source of reference but are not likely to stimulate renewed interest in the therapeutic application of these ion exchangers. STANLEY H. LORBER

Allergy Cooking, by Marion L. Conrad, Thomas Y. Crowell Company, New York, 1955, pp. 380, $5.00.

From a long personal experience with allergy, the author of this book has compiled more than 600 recipes including appetizers, meats, poultry, fish, sauces, vegetables, salads, fruits, desserts, and beverages. Menu and recipe combinations are planned for a basic diet adjusted to individual allergies. The basic plan includes meat, fish, or fowl; potatoes or other allowed starch; vegetables and fruits. Suggested menus and recipes are also included for the basic diet with additions of milk, eggs, and/or wheat.

The recipes are practical and are so planned that the product may be used for the entire family. The author

has shown considerable ingenuity in achieving varied and interesting dishes which require, for the most part, only those ingredients available in any food market. The methods of preparation are clearly and concisely given.

Special problems, such as eating-out at parties, restaurants, picnics and camping trips, and dietary variations for children and elderly persons, are discussed briefly but adequately. It is unfortunate that some of the nutrition information was not more carefully checked before publication. For example, on page 39, the term "powdered calcium" is used, and should have been designated as a specific calcium salt. On page 136 appears the statement that a medium-size white potato contains as much calcium as "half a tablespoon of cream cheese." While the statement is correct in itself, it is misleading in that it implies to the uninformed that cream cheese is an important source of calcium, which it is not. On page 355 the units for calcium and iron are erroneously given. Values given for thiamine, ascorbic acid, and riboflavin are those representing micrograms and milligrams, but are stated to be International Units, a designation long since obsolete. The discussion on reducing and gaining weight as presented by the author, is confusing and could well have been omitted.

The author urges each patient to use this book as a supplement to a physician's prescription. When so used, the patient will obtain many valuable suggestions for meal planning and preparation. The dietitian will find the book useful as a reference for its recipes.

C. R.

Protein Malnutrition, edited by J. C. Waterlow. Cambridge University Press, 1955, pp. 277, $3.50.

The title "Protein Malnutrition" may be misleading as a description of the proceedings of a conference held in 1953 and sponsored jointly by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United States, World Health Organization, and the Josiah Macy, Jr., Foundation. The conferees could not agree on a single definition of protein malnutrition and much of the conference was concerned with kwashiorkor, which some members equated with protein malnutrition and for which no entirely agreeable definition could be made. For readers familiar with the style of the Macy conferences, this apparent lack of finality will be no surprise, for these meetings are not designed or intended to arrive at a final answer, but rather to explore a subject by free discussion among a small group of experts representing different avenues of approach. This conference (four days in Jamaica) followed the typical Macy pattern, so that anyone interested in a didactic presentation or discussion of the subject should look elsewhere.

First, the participants are listed much as the *dramatis personae* before a play. The remainder of the book also resembles a play, as it is pure dialogue. But here the resemblance becomes less exact, for the plot is rather vague, the argument often wanders far from the story line, and there is little or no dénouement. The discussion, however, usually held a point, was generally erudite, sometimes witty, and occasionally sharp.

The participants are all experts, many with extensive first-hand experience with problems concerned with protein malnutrition, kwashiorkor, and marasmus as these conditions are seen among infants and children in the West Indies, Africa, India, and Central and South America. All three conditions are undoubtedly due primarily to malnutrition. Which diagnosis will apply to a particular patient a reader may have in mind, depends upon which of the several given definitions the reader accepts or whose argument is the most convincing.

The recorded discussion takes up successively the biochemical aspects, pathology, clinical aspects, epidemiology and prevention of protein malnutrition. A summary follows each section but the last. Unfortunately, no index is included.

Some readers may well wonder why the proceedings of a conference as informal as this one should be published, but for those deeply interested in the field the book is important as an attempt to integrate concepts of disease from several quite diverse parts of the world. For those who believe they know what protein malnutrition, kwashiorkor, and marasmus are the book is a must, but in this case it should be read with caution as it will upset many preconceived ideas.

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