BOOK REVIEWS

WHO EXPERT COMMITTEE ON SPECIFICATIONS FOR PHARMACEUTICAL PREPARATIONS

Twenty-seventh Report. World Health Organization Technical Report Series, No. 645, 1980. 54 pages, Price: Sw-Fr. 4 — English with French and Spanish editions in preparation.

This publication is mainly devoted to recommendations on tests used for the quality control of solid oral dosage forms (such as tablets and capsules) and to a general review of drug quality control systems. A number of allied topics are also dealt with, including a progress report on the third edition of the International Pharmacopoeia, of which volume 1 has already appeared. The current status of International Chemical Reference Substances is described, followed by a brief review of basic, simplified tests for establishing the identity of a drug and for ascertaining the absence of gross degradation to meet the needs of the many developing countries that do not have easy access to large, well-equipped drug control laboratories.

The report describes the test methodology to be used for tablets and capsules and includes a number of new approaches, especially in the testing of their strength (contents) and performance. The tests for strength are usually carried out by a simplified approach in a combined procedure consisting of the assay of a composite prepared from a number (usually 20) of tablets and then testing the uniformity of weight. In the case of highly potent drugs this is not fully reliable and a more complicated procedure (a "content uniformity test") has to be used. Performance test are designed to provide assurance that the dosage form, when administered, will release the active ingredient as it is intended to do. Concerning these tests, the report gives details of standardized disintergration testing and advises on the approaches to be used for dissolution testing.

Drug quality control systems encompass "quality assessment", the province of governmental agencies, and "quality assurance", properly the responsibility of pharmaceutical manufacturers. The report notes that the process of acquiring a pharmaceutical raw material, converting it into a finished product and making it available to the consumer involves a number of operations which require stringent surveillance to ensure that the user receives a satisfactory product. Countries have envolved a variety of procedures for quality assessment, and to aid the evolution of such national programmes the report provides, in an annex, a comprehensive review of approaches to drug quality assessment and assurance.

VENERAL DISEASES.

KING, A., NICOL, C. AND RODIN, P. The English Language Book Society and Bailliere Tindall, London, 1980, 4th Edition, 419 pages, 190 figures, 5 tables, 15 colour plates, paperback, £4.75.

The first edition of this classic was published in 1964. Since then a considerable number of changes and developments have taken place. Hopes that new remedies and improved methods would have at least diminished the problem of the sexually transmitted disease have not met with success and today the sexually transmitted diseases remain as an important source of ill health. Recent years have actually witnessed an increase in the incidence of the sexually transmitted diseases.

The authors have their reasons in retaining the original title of Veneral Diseases, but I would have preferred the title of Sexually Transmitted Diseases. Many sections in this classic textbook on the sexually transmitted diseases have been entirely rewritten and expanded. A good deal of new information has been added and up-dated. However, the section on preventive measures, particularly the paragraph on contact tracing, really deserves a more thorough work up. Nonetheless, this important textbook should be available on the desk of every general practitioner most of whom will inevitably see, in the course of a week, several patients with sexually transmitted diseases.

PAUL C.Y. CHEN