

Book Review

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Saunders Dictionary and Encyclopedia of Laboratory Medicine and Technology, 1st ed, by James L. Bennington, Philadelphia, W. B. Saunders, 1984, 1,674 pp, \$75.00.

Personnel of hospital laboratories have long felt the need for a comprehensive reference source which would answer, briefly and authoritatively, the many questions which arise in their daily work. The effort involved in the collection and organization of the material contained in *Saunders Dictionary and Encyclopedia of Laboratory Medicine and Technology* is impressive. The book is written in the scholarly fashion which many have come to expect of a Saunders publication. Most of the sections are pertinent. Brevity has been obtained by the omission of much background or strictly historical material.

The descriptions of most branches of the laboratory are good. The sections dealing with microbiology are especially well done. Discussions are succinct yet complete. An optimal balance is attained so that the subject matter will satisfy the needs of both the basic scientist and the more clinically minded reader. The sections dealing with hematology, immunopathology, and biochemistry are also good. Many of the more important subjects in these disciplines are given as much space and discussed as completely as essays carefully composed for a textbook chapter or a review journal.

In light of the book's strengths, it may seem a bit hypercritical to point out flaws. Nevertheless, the author's treatment of blood banking and related subjects does not measure up to the standards set by other discussions of laboratory medicine. Most sections do not answer questions as fully as one expects. Minor errors are made in spelling and punctuation (for example, Coombs' test is spelled with the apostrophe before the "s" in several places), and there are minor departures from accepted nomenclature. The ABO system is described as being composed of types and the MN system as having groups. This reviewer could find nothing about the Sd or some of the other minor systems, as well as the LW antigen. The entry which discusses the blood bank specialist fails to recognize the role of the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB) in the SBB program. In general, most sections disregard the role of the AABB and the regulatory role of the government in the conduct of blood banking. In spite of these fairly minor criticisms, this book belongs on the shelves of all hospital laboratory libraries.

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