Book review

W.H.O. Expert Committee on Biological Standardization: 25th Report (W.H.O. Technical Reports Series No. 530). Pp. 66. W.H.O., Geneva (40p)

The establishment and use of biological standards derived from the work of Dale and his colleagues (1939), and, in recent years, reports of the W.H.O. Expert Committee on Biological Standardization, have provided guidance in areas where standards are being developed. The specification of requirements to be fulfilled by preparations of biological substances is necessary in order to ensure that these products are safe, reliable, and potent prophylactic or therapeutic agents. International recommendations on requirements are intended to facilitate the exchange of biological substances between different countries and to provide guidance to workers responsible for the production of these substances as well as to others who may have to decide upon appropriate methods of assay and control. The present (25th) Expert Committee was, by a happy coincidence, convened in the year of the 25th anniversary

of the World Health Organization. Its report describes new specifications of pharmacological and immunological substances and is clearly in keeping with the high standards of the Committee's work. I recommend that this report is read in conjunction with the 1972 W.H.O. publication 'Biological Substances: International Standards, Reference Preparations and Reference Reagents', so that the reader can judge for himself the subtle distinctions between these three areas of designation. Otherwise, the only apparent item of possible rheumatological interest in the 1973 report seems to be a definition for an international standard for human IgE.

The initial conception of a biological standard was due to Paul Ehrlich, who introduced it to assist the standardization of diphtheria antitoxin. In this context, the 25th report of the W.H.O. Expert Committee, together with the 1972 W.H.O. publication on biological standards, make particularly relevant reading for the rheumatologist interested in the standardization of his serological reagents.

D. C. DUMONDE

Notes

South African Rheumatism and Arthritis Association

IV Conference, Durban, May 14 to 17, 1974.

The IV South African Conference on Rheumatism, Arthritis, and Allied Disorders will be held in Durban on May 14 to 17, 1974. Enquiries should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, Dr. W. G. McNeill, Medical School, P.O. Box 39, Congella, Natal, South Africa.

Second Alessandro Robecchi International Prize, 1975

The second Alessandro Robecchi prize for clinical, biological, and experimental research in Rheumatology will be awarded by an international panel at the Congress of the European League against Rheumatism at Helsinki in June, 1975.

Entries, written in Italian, English, French, German or Spanish, should be submitted before December 1, 1974, to Prof. Vittorio Daneo, Direttore del Centro di Reumatologia, Ospedale Maggiore di San Giovanni Battista, Corso Bramante 88, 10126 Torino, Italy, to whom all enquiries should be addressed.