work a better appearance and the wide dissemination which it very much deserves.

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This useful book about the International System of Units (SI) sets out international and national standard practice and otherwise attempts to codify majority views. Medical and biological science and practice are continually changing, leading to new symbols, abbreviations, and conventions coming into use. Supplies of the 4th edition (1988) were becoming exhausted, so it was decided to revise it.

Section I, an explanation of metrication and SI units, has needed changes neither in its listing nor in the explanatory notes—with the exception of the note on BS 5775 (Quantities, units and symbols), for which corresponding ISO standards have been updated to those published in 1993. The table giving examples of conversion factors from other units to SI units is representative rather than complete; those of us involved in the literature of biomedicine might want to supplement this with the New England Journal of Medicine's 1992 SI Unit Conversion Guide, which is aiming to convert the recalcitrant Americans to use of SI. It is available in England from NEJM Books, Saxon Way, Melbourne, Royston SG8 6NJ.

In section II—a useful, cross-disciplinary list of abbreviations, from 'about (used numerically)' to 'zoological nomenclature'—the 5th edition has added yocto-, yotta-, zepto-, and zetta—: all higher powers of 10. The reference list has been brought up to date.

Section III is substantially unchanged, though the sequential-numerical system has been renamed the citation-sequence system, and the name-and-year system designated by its better-known name, the Harvard system. The section, in six pages, clarifies these systems for authors typing up their papers for submission to journals. The final section, BSI symbols for proof corrections, has changed in appearance only because of slight changes in typesetting. A new standard is said to be in preparation.

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British Medical Journal

Publications received and publications noted


