Book reviews

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A Dictionary of Genetic Engineering

By Stephen G Oliver and John M Ward. (Pp 153; £12.50.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1985.

It seemed that the best way to assess the usefulness of this book would be for a clinical geneticist, of a not particularly molecular inclination, to use it to help to unravel a couple of papers of burning interest to anyone involved in medical genetics. Those chosen were Monaco *et al*, *Nature* 1986; **323**: 646–50 (the description of the discovery of potential cDNA clones for Duchenne muscular dystrophy) and Orkin, *Cell* 1986; **47**: 845–50 (a review of reverse genetics and human disease). I am delighted to say that the dictionary stood up well to both tests. It was used extensively, particularly for the first article, and only four words needed by the tester were not found. In fact most missing words were more of a genetic nature than straight 'genetic engineering'.

It was impressive in both lariat and banjo but a trifle technical in some of the terms, for example, hybridisation – a test of sequence homology. It showed up very well in cross referencing. For example 'cDNA' led into a chain going to 'cDNA cloning' to 'promote' to 'operon'. It also contains many words of more interest to the microbiologist than the geneticist.

Verdict: likely to be useful for any clinician wishing to dip into the more molecular articles relevant to clinical genetics.

K TEMPLE AND S MALCOLM

Genetics and the Law III

Edited by A Milunsky and G J Annas. (Pp 514; \$42.50.) New York: Plenum Press. 1985.

This book contains the proceedings of the Third National Symposium on Genetics and the Law held in Boston in April 1984. This third volume in a series of symposium proceedings could have been a repetition of the same participants rehashing the same topics. Such is not the case; a broad group of professionals representing genetics, public health, public policy, theology, law, and ethics has produced in 35 chapters an erudite and thoughtful survey of issues resulting from the 'new genetics' and new medical technologies. The impact of

industry's entry into the funding and development of genetic research is timely covered. In each of the 10 sections there is an introductory presentation which succinctly defines the science, methodology, and concerns of an issue which is then discussed by experts of the relevant disciplines. The discussion by participants included at the end of each section provides an opportunity for differing prospects to be addressed. Most of the chapters run to eight to 10 pages and, uncommon for a multi-authored book, there is a cohesiveness and effort at succinctness that does not rely on sub-specialty jargon.

This book is a timely and scholarly collection of treatises and discussions of the many issues where current and future genetic activities confront the law and ethics at points where the course is largely uncharted. It is an excellent resource for professionals and students who are concerned about these issues.

THADDEUS E KELLY

The Genetics of the Skeleton

By D R Johnson. (Pp 407). Oxford: Oxford Science Publications. 1986.

This book is written by an anatomist with the aim of gathering in one place up to date information relating to the development of the skeleton from its earliest embryological days to completion. The plan for each chapter is the same, with a full summary outlining the normal structural, biochemical, and genetic development so far as is known, followed by details of experimental work relating to animal mutants, then a brief section relating to human disease and malformation, and finally an 'overview' summarising and commenting on the data.

The author first discusses the problems of using animal models of disease processes. One chapter each is then devoted to the membranous, cartilaginous, and bony skeleton, followed by chapters on the axial skeleton, the skull, face, and palate, the teeth, and then the limbs. A final section on genes and teratogens is followed by the author's conclusions on the validity of animal models. Two appendices contain a list of stockholders of genetic material and a note of comparative times of development for the mouse, rat, and chick.

The book is not aimed at geneticists, but rather at 'clinical scientists', whether anatomists, biochem-