of the book. The topics covered in five articles overlap, with the consequent repetition of some information. Furthermore, in this rapidly advancing field articles written in 1983 are inevitably dated. Apart from this section the multi-authorship presents no problems and indeed makes the range of the book possible.

The presentation of the Chinese experiences concentrates on work on environmental mutagens and carcinogens. The articles are of high quality and again are more than simply research papers.

The format of the book and quality of reproduction of the photographs is good.

J E N Morten

An Atlas of Characteristic Syndromes
By H R Wiedemann, K R Gross, and H Dibbern. (Pp 413; figures + tables. £30·00.) Stuttgart: Wolfe Medical Publications. 1985.

This comprehensive atlas of genetic syndromes follows the pattern initiated by Smith's classical book. Indeed at first sight the two look very similar, so the question arises of whether this volume has any advantages. After several weeks of 'consumer testing' in a busy clinical department, the answer is clearly yes. Both Smith and Wiedemann were found to be useful and complementary in the investigation of undiagnosed malformation syndromes. Points where the latter scores favourably are in quality of photographs (more uniformly than Smith) and of *x*-rays. The text is clearly laid out and accurate, though (as with Smith) genetic aspects are only dealt with briefly. There is no general section dealing with developmental processes, which is one of the strong points of Smith. The arrangement of syndromes is also rather less easy to follow; again this is perhaps because of familiarity over the years with Smith.

This edition is a translation from German, but reads very easily, to the credit of the translator. The introduction states that it is aimed at general clinicians, but the clinical geneticist, as well as the paediatrician especially interested in dysmorphic syndromes, will find it a valuable book to own personally, while in neonatal units and libraries it should find a place alongside Smith, not superseding it, but the two to be used together as diagnostic tools.

Peter S Harper

Molecular Genetics of Common Metabolic Disease
By David J Galton. (Pp 140; figures + tables. £9·95.) London: Arnold. 1985.

That developments in recombinant DNA technology are beginning to revolutionise biology and medicine is now universally accepted. To those physicians and geneticists not directly involved in the field there is therefore an understandable search for texts in which the basic principles and applications of the new technology are outlined simply and accurately. This is such a book.

The title, however, is a little misleading. In two brief chapters only the hyperlipidaemias and diabetes mellitus are dealt with and, since little is still known of their molecular pathology, the discussion of these disorders centres on more general matters. There are in all eight chapters. The first two introduce some general principles; thereafter the author proceeds to deal with DNA structure, gene cloning, genetic polymorphisms, the hyperlipidaemias, and diabetes mellitus. A final chapter is concerned with future developments, particularly possibilities in gene therapy. There is a glossary and an index.

On the whole the book fulfils the requirements of an introductory text. It is accurate, well written, and very well illustrated with many excellent diagrams. However, there are some inconsistencies of approach. For example, it is a pity that the use of DNA markers in counselling and prenatal diagnosis are covered too superficially to be really helpful, yet somewhat hypothetical discussions of evolution and natural selection are included, which would seem out of place in a book primarily concerned with the basic principles of molecular genetics. Nevertheless this little book will be found useful by those who want a quick overview of the subject.

Alan E H Emery

Molecular Genetics of Common Metabolic Disease

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Notes