Fire metaphor itself. The victims in Kuwait and Southern and Northern Iraq were military personnel whereas autoimmune disease generally affects cells and tissues which are not part of the immune system. However, "Cold Fire" metaphor, while a more accurate description, would not have made such a racy book title.

Friendly Fire is written for the general reader and provides an engaging overview of the breadth of tissues and responses involved while giving an economical overview of the immune system itself. It is peppered with anecdotes relating to systemic lupus erythematosus and HIV which are the major interests of the authors and are often entertaining. In this context it is a pity to see controversies within the research community dealt with as if there were unanimity. The authors present rheumatoid arthritis as a prototypical autoimmune disease although they will be aware of a strong current of opinion which refutes the evidence for this. On p 37 ankylosing spondylitis (AS) is described as "not a true autoimmune disease" yet it features in a figure on multiple cases of autoimmune diseases in a single family. To continue the military analogy, this seems to be a "false confirmation" while there are important genetic components of autoimmune conditions (p 31). Indeed, this book includes the boldest declaration for the suppressor T cell in its purest form which I've seen in a long while.

Why should clinically orientated geneticists be interested in a book about autoimmune disease? Apart from the fact that around 5% of us will suffer from at least one autoimmune disease in our lifetime, the majority of these diseases have an inherited component. The development of almost every autoimmune condition is influenced by alleles at loci in the major histocompatibility complex or HLA system. However, we still have no clear understanding of the role of this gene system in the induction of such diseases other than a vague notion of thresholds being exceeded and balances upset. Friendly Fire ends with a chapter on potential therapies. These include several which have probably been mentioned for completeness rather than as serious candidates. However, the general reader will be interested to hear that there is real hope for the future as more immune system targets become identified and are experimentally manipulated. I was grateful to the author for pointing out that it was Peter Parham who first elaborated the military metaphor. Perhaps he should be the one to arbitrate on whether metaphors represent heavy armour and whether cytokines are more chemical or biological warfare.

JERRY LANCHBURY


As genetic knowledge increases and becomes more widely applied so it becomes more important for the adopted person to have information about his or her genetic parents and family history. Where this is unavailable or he or she may feel particularly vulnerable when starting their own family and request "genetic testing" in general, a request difficult to discuss in a vacuum. Reasons for this anxiety will become clearer after reading this book.

It is multidisciplinary with contributions from clinicians, social workers, and a lawyer all involved in British Adoption Societies, together with clinical and laboratory geneticists and research psychologists. The only omission is that of a person himself or herself but a chapter of illustrative case studies and other case reports and quotes to some extent fill this gap.

The early sections outline medical aspects and stress the importance of obtaining adequate details of the birth parents' family history, although inevitably this may prove difficult. A number of chapters describe relevant genetic disorders with special emphasis on neurological, developmental, cardiac, and psychiatric disorders, and malignant disease. Inevitably repetition occurs as neurofibromatosis comes under several of these headings.

The middle section describes the "new genetics" and its clinical applications, including a chapter on the Human Genome Project. More detail is supplied than most readers will require but these chapters do make plain the rapidly changing backgrounds to which modern adoption practice has to adapt.

Throughout the book the exceedingly sensitive ethical issues weave and interweave. Confidentiality issues and the sometimes conflicting interests of the birth parents, the adopting parents, and, most importantly, of the child him or herself raise tensions often unresolved.

 Chapters on the genetics testing of children and on the psychological impact of genetic testing of any type illustrate how little factual information is available in these areas. There is a clear need for careful evaluation and scientific study so that guidelines for those involved in face to face encounter with both birth parents and adoptive parents can be based on real information rather than anecdote.

Readers of this journal will know most of the genetics contained in this book but will benefit from reading it as their eyes will be opened to the developments in genetics on adults adopted many years ago and on those currently concerned with the proceedings. It can be recommended as essential reading for all those professionally involved with the adoption process.

A CAROLINE BERRY


This book reviews the latest offering in a distinguished series of symposium proceedings emanating from the Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press. It presents a collection of "well written" papers with participation of the symposium of the same name held at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory a year ago. The volume is organised around five subjects: control of cell cycle and cell growth, checkpoints and genome stability, apoptosis, genetic models, human cancer genes and their products, and genetic methods for diagnosis and cancer therapy.

Given that the papers presented in the final category were focused primarily on gene therapy, it is the penultimate category that would be of immediate relevance to medical geneticists. Two retrospective reviews the genetic approaches deployed in the identification and cloning of the BRCA1 gene, which should prove a useful body of experience to geneticists contemplating a similar exercise on their favoured syndrome. Other papers discuss the characterisation of various candidate genes that have been identified by genetic approaches as well as discussing models of tumour development and progression.

The other chapters are much more heavily based on basic biological research into cell regulation. In this regard, they do not disappoint, providing handy reviews of the cutting edge in this burgeoning area of investigation and thereby offering a useful background into the processes that might be active in cancer. They may also supply a ready source of candidate genes for further investigation by medical geneticists wishing to characterise the aetiology of human cancer. A basic understanding of these approaches is assumed in the reviews and less well prepared readers would be advised to have the relevant chunks of the current edition of a dictionary of molecular biology text, say, The molecular biology of the cell.

In summary, the content of this volume is heavily biased toward the biology of cancer and although mostly not of direct relevance to medical geneticists, it is a useful reference text to consult when attempting to develop a fresh approach to genetic research in cancer and as such may be usefully acquired by medical libraries.

DAVID HUEN


This is an extensive book about FAP and associated disorders by authors who have made big contributions in this field. The book inevitably has a surgical bias, but in some senses this makes it even more applicable to a clinical genetics readership. It contains strong chapters on introduction, history and registry, pathology, endoscopy, screening including CHIRPE identification, and the various surgical options. The St Mark's experience with FAP is such that they of all all centres who are best placed to offer surgical guidelines on the management of this condition. Inevitably there will be a slight bias in their ascertainment with more severely affected cases and families being referred. Nonetheless, their recommendations are broadly applicable, particularly to FAP itself.

There are, nonetheless, areas in which some criticisms are rather arbitrary. For example, while the experience of St Mark's with screening of the upper GI tract for duodenal polyps and cancer is undeniable, they are yet to show a benefit for this form of screening, and in some sense this should be treated in the same way as screening in other cancer settings, such as that of the ovary with ovarian
The Molecular Genetics of Cancer

David Huen

*J Med Genet* 1995 32: 999
doi: 10.1136/jmg.32.12.999-a

Updated information and services can be found at:
http://jmg.bmj.com/content/32/12/999.2.citation

These include:

Email alerting service

Receive free email alerts when new articles cite this article. Sign up in the box at the top right corner of the online article.

Notes

To request permissions go to:
http://group.bmj.com/group/rights-licensing/permissions

To order reprints go to:
http://journals.bmj.com/cgi/reprintform

To subscribe to BMJ go to:
http://group.bmj.com/subscribe/