Book reviews

Journal of Medical Genetics 1987, **24**, 445-448

Goldberg's Genetic and Metabolic Eye Disease

Edited by William Andrew Rennie. (Pp 574; figures+tables. £72.90.) Boston: Little, Brown and Co. 1986.

The first edition of this book was published in 1974 and, since then, there has been an enormous increase in our knowledge of genetic eye disease, both in research and in clinical discoveries. Much of this increase has resulted from the development of recombinant DNA technology and its application to ophthalmology, and one of the new chapters in this second edition is devoted to this topic. The first third of the book is concerned with 'Methods of study in genetic eye disease' and the seven chapters in this section will give the ophthalmologist an up to date account of the fundamentals of modern clinical genetics.

The remaining 13 chapters are in a section entitled 'Genetic determination of clinical eye disease' and cover many aspects of ophthalmology. There are completely new chapters on strabismus and glaucoma, while those on corneal diseases, ectopia lentis, retinoblastoma, hereditary macular dystrophies, and oculocutaneous genetic diseases have been rewritten. The chapter on corneal diseases merits particular mention, as does that on hereditary macular dystrophies. The former contains an excellent, comprehensive, and succinct description of each corneal dystrophy, while the latter provides a valuable synopsis of this complex group of disorders.

This is a book that can be highly recommended to the practising ophthalmologist. The first section will bring him abreast of modern developments, while the second contains excellent vignettes on many aspects of genetic eye disease. The fact that it is not comprehensive does not detract from its value.

BARRIE JAY

Human Prenatal Diagnosis

Edited by K Filkins and J F Russo. (Pp 418; figures+tables. \$90.00.) New York: Marcell Dekker. 1985.

Medical geneticists usually regard prenatal diagnosis as their own subject. It has changed genetic counselling from a rather depressing cataloguing of risks into something with positive and hopeful options. Every advance in prenatal diagnostic technology has immediate impact in the counselling clinic. It has been instructive to watch the speed with which medical geneticists have mastered the complex

language and concepts of molecular biology. They know that without this specialist knowledge their ability to counsel would quickly become dated.

It is therefore intriguing to encounter a book on prenatal diagnosis edited by two obstetricians, neither of whom I had encountered before. Karen Filkins contributes to a chapter on ultrasonography, but J F Russo is clearly weighed down by the scale of his editorial responsibility and keeps his writing pen sheathed. I have no idea what area of expertise he claims. But no matter. Perhaps by keeping some distance from the subject, the editors can bring a welcome detachment and balance to this rapidly changing subject.

It is very much an obstetrician's view of prenatal diagnosis. Indeed, and of some surprise to the geneticist, the longest chapter in the book covers ultrasonography in the third trimester. There are sections on fetoscopy, fetal echocardiography, chorionic villus sampling, embryoscopy, and fetal therapy, as well as on ultrasonography in the first and second trimesters. The chapter on the legal implications is cursory and ethical considerations are not discussed. I would have preferred more detail on the current position on the safety of chorionic villus sampling.

Perhaps inevitably, the book is at its weakest in its coverage of the laboratory based disciplines. The chapter on neural tube defects is particularly superficial, with acetylcholinesterase gaining a single footnote comment and lacking an index entry. Microvillar enzyme assay for cystic fibrosis is not mentioned. Although the section on inborn errors of metabolism has quite a comprehensive and useful table, prenatal diagnosis of Mendelian disorders by DNA analysis appears as an addendum. For a book with a publication date of 1985, this suggests a lack of perspective on the cutting edge in prenatal diagnosis.

There has been a shortage in recent years of comprehensive textbooks on this subject. I doubt very much that this book by Filkins and Russo will fill the gap. It is poorly conceived, unattractively presented, and unnecessarily expensive.

D J H BROCK

Oncogenes: Their Role in Normal and Malignant Growth

Edited by W F Bodmer, R Weiss, and J Wyke. (Pp 134; £15.50.) London: The Royal Society. 1985.

This is a slim volume which records the proceedings