Book reviews

Journal of Medical Genetics, 1984, **21**, 236-239

Ir Genes. Past, Present, and Future

Edited by C W Pierce, S E Cullen, J A Kapp, B D Schwartz, and D C Shreffler. (Pp xxvi+261; figures + tables. £56.00.) Clifton, New Jersey: Humana Press. 1983.

This collection of manuscripts is based on presentations to the 5th Ir Gene Workshop held in August 1982. A total of 240 scientists attended the meeting and the 85 contributions printed here present the potential reviewer with an impossible task. I must confess that I have an aversion to these publications, especially when they are in hard covers and embellished with a somewhat misleading title. The reader might expect to find here at least one 'overview' article covering the background to Ir genes up to August 1982, and perhaps a detached assessment of the plethora of detail presented in these 600 pages. He will, I fear, be disappointed. This is pure Workshop material intended for the cogniscenti (whether or not they attended the meeting) and no allowance whatever is made for the non-initiated outsider. The final contribution "Where From Here?" by Jan Klein and Zoltan Nagy does attempt to summarise briefly the state of our knowledge about Ir genes and lists the areas where much more work is still required. I would have preferred to see this section expanded to give a much more wide ranging evaluation of the field.

Predictably this volume is heavily biased towards the laboratory mouse and there is only a tiny amount of space devoted to human Ia antigens. This is, of course, a true reflection of the partition of effort in this area but, inevitably, it does make this volume of much less interest to readers of this journal.

M W TURNER

Genetics of Cardiovascular Disease

Progress in Medical Genetics Volume V. Edited by A G Steinberg, A G Bearn, A G Motulsky, and B Childs. (Pp viii + 423; figures + tables. £52.00.) Philadelphia, London: Saunders. 1983.

This volume of Progress in Medical Genetics consists of eight chapters entirely devoted to cardiovascular topics. It is a valuable volume covering an area which has received somewhat less attention than the frequency and importance of the disorders warrant. One hopes that cardiologists and

epidemiologists in the field of heart disease will read it, in addition to medical geneticists. The contributions fall into two groups. Four of the chapters, those on coronary heart disease by Berg, congenital heart disease by the Noras, connective tissue disorders by Pyeritz, and syndromal associations by Schinzel, are detailed and extensive reviews of their topics, which form up-to-date and authoritative statements of our current knowledge. The other four chapters are briefer reviews of areas in which there is, for the most part, less information and as a result these make somewhat less satisfactory reading.

The chapter on coronary heart disease concentrates on the lipoproteins, but sadly was written before any of the recent evidence on localisation of the genes concerned and the application of new molecular techniques became available. Despite this, the chapter is a most valuable and detailed account of the lipoproteins and their disorders as they affect coronary heart disease.

Of the two chapters on congenital heart disease, that by Schinzel dealing with syndromal aspects gives most new information and is particularly thorough in its assessment of the different types of cardiovascular disease seen in specific chromosomal disorders. Mendelian and possible teratogenic syndromes are also well reviewed, and the overall importance of looking carefully for syndromal features is something which anyone dealing with diagnosis or counselling in congenital heart disease should be aware of.

The chapter by the Noras also stresses the likely importance of teratogens and gives a clear guide to counselling risks in the various congenital heart disorders.

The chapter on heritable disorders of connective tissue can almost be seen as an extension of McKusick's book on the subject, with valuable detailed accounts of the specific problems in both the structural connective tissue disorders, such as Marfan syndrome, and in the various inborn errors of metabolism, such as the mucopolysaccharidoses. Again, there are many useful points here concerning management in addition to diagnostic and genetic aspects.

Among the shorter chapters, the review of hypertension, while valuable, shows how far we still have to go to identify the specific genetic factors involved, while those on mitral valve prolapse and