Book reviews

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Human Gene Mapping 9

Ninth International Workshop on Human Gene Mapping, Paris, September 1987. Edited by J Frézal and H P Klinger. (Pp vi+762; £88.20.) Basel: Karger. 1987.

It is a measure of the rapid pace of advance in gene mapping that those who attended the Paris meeting of Human Gene Mapping 9 in September 1987 should have been impatiently awaiting its publication. Its arrival in May 1988 (though carrying a 1987 publication date) gives plenty of material to consult, and some to read, between now and Human Gene Mapping 9-5 and 10, held later this year and in 1989 respectively.

The sheer amount of information in this volume makes one realise how much work has gone into it; for this the organiser and publishers deserve much credit, as do the committee chairmen and the computing staff responsible for most of the contents.

The long hallowed format of division into committees for specific groups of chromosomes has held up remarkably well, though the chapter on mapping by DNA techniques comes close to being submerged by the flood of new data. The abstracts of posters give much new information though, as with all abstracts, there is a danger that they will be cited as definitive, which is often not the case.

Future organisers will have to ask for whom these volumes are intended. Until now, and including the present volume, they are written and compiled almost exclusively for the research worker in the gene mapping field. However, the pace inevitably means that these workers will be kept informed by personal contact, small workshops, and on line computerised systems. Those who really need the volume are other workers in human genetics, and the style and format are not exactly 'user friendly' for such people, whether scientists or clinical geneticists. With careful planning, Human Gene Mapping 10 could be attractive to this wider audience, without losing its value as a reference source for gene mappers.

PETER S HARPER

Fetal and Neonatal Pathology

Edited by Jean W Keeling. (Pp 590; £99.00.) Berlin: Springer-Verlag. 1987.

This book is aimed at the histopathologist whom Dr Keeling claims is among the last of the generalists in

hospital practice. Certainly the clinical geneticist, whose specialty encompasses disorders of all body systems in all age groups, should own a copy. From a genetic viewpoint this is the best fetal and neonatal pathology book around, in spite of the fact that many of the authors fail to mention the contribution which clinical geneticists can, and in many regions already do, make to examination, investigation, and diagnosis in fetuses and newborns.

The reason I liked it so much is that there is uniformity of style and organisation of the chapters; the illustrations and line drawings are excellent and the chapters are divided up into digestible packages with tables to pick out salient points. Mechanisms leading to pathological outcomes are discussed and there is a good reference section with each chapter.

The book is well organised into two major sections; the first 15 chapters deal with methodology of various examinations, epidemiology, and the pathology of relatively commonly encountered situations such as prematurity, asphyxia, infections and hydrops. The last 13 chapters are concerned with particular organ systems, each written by a contributor with a special interest and expertise.

Certain chapters deserve special mention, including Dr Keeling's own contributions on hydrops, asphyxia, and methodology of examination and the clearly illustrated chapter on malformations of the CNS by Michael Laurence.

My criticisms are few: there is no mention of 13q- and retinoblastoma, or 11p- and aniridia in the section on 'developmental anomalies of the eye in specific chromosome defects'; in the section on the endocrine system Beckwith-Wiedemann syndrome is credited with recessive inheritance and Zellweger syndrome's underlying aetiology is said to be unknown with no mention of peroxisomes.

All regional genetic centres should buy a copy for their libraries and those clinical geneticists with a special interest in fetal and neonatal medicine may wish to invest in a personal copy.

DIAN DONNAI

Molecular Biology of Homo Sapiens

Cold Spring Harbor Symposia Vol LI. (Pp 1228; \$80.00.) New York: Cold Spring Harbor Publications. 1986.

I am tempted to unleash a flood of superlatives about this book; instead I will simply describe it as