Book reviews

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Endocrine Genes: Analytical Methods, Experimental Approaches, and Selected Systems

Edited by Yun-Fai Lau. (Pp 224; £30.00.) New York: Oxford University Press. 1988.

The book is the result of a series of research seminars held in the University of California in the autumn of 1984. The authors have clearly tried to update their presentations but, from the state of the methodology and the reference lists, it is quite clear that the book is already considerably dated. What is not in doubt, however, is the fact that the contributors are from groups of excellence with established reputations who have very much been at the centre of developments in molecular endocrinology. Despite the fact that it is a multi-author production, the standard of the presentations is remarkably uniform and high and I certainly enjoyed reading this book and learned from it. It is difficult to know what its ideal readership would be, but there is no doubt that any endocrinologists aspiring to the application of recombinant DNA technology to problems in endocrinology would be well advised to peruse this manuscript. The book essentially seeks to highlight developments in technology and provide examples of their application and it does this well. Clearly from the size of it, the information that it contains relating to methodology is somewhat limited, but the excellent referencing will ensure that readers can track down more specific information, if they require it. My initial criticism that the work was somewhat dated because of the rapid developments in the field in no way diminishes the value of this book as a starting source of information in molecular endocrinology.

A M MCGREGOR

Mendelian Inheritance in Man. Catalogs of Autosomal Dominant, Autosomal Recessive, and X-linked Phenotypes

8th edition. By Victor A McKusick. (£47.00.) Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. 1988.

It has not been easy to review the 8th edition of 'McKusick' (the chocolate brown one) because whenever I decided to look at it in detail I found that someone in the department had borrowed it. The

fact that it has been in constant use since it landed on my desk a month ago is perhaps the best recommendation of all. Quite simply all clinicians, not just those involved in genetic disorders, should have access to this book through their medical library or in their own department. Some medical geneticists will want their own personal copy. Those clinicians who claim that their practice does not involve disorders inherited in a Mendelian fashion are probably wrong!

Mendelian Inheritance in Man (or MIM, as Dr McKusick abbreviates it) is an ideal way of getting into the body of published reports for those clinicians who rarely deal with a particular Mendelian disorder. The value of MIM as a starting point for a search of publications is, of course, well known to the majority of readers of this Journal, and yet I can recall many times when I have opted to search elsewhere, perhaps in a more specialised book, only to find in the end that it would have been best to have gone straight to MIM.

Since the 7th edition (1986) the total number of entries has increased by 437 to 4344, of which 2136 are in the provisional category, representing loci that are not fully identified or validated and therefore do not receive an asterisk. The total number of different references cited is now 31 278 (with 48 551 authors). There are also some new features in the appendices to the Foreword. The section on the Human Gene Map is greatly improved and much more user friendly. I had found earlier human gene maps, particularly the section dealing with disorders for which the mutation had been mapped to a specific site, difficult to use because of the lack of an alphabetical listing of the disorders. This has now been put right. The gene symbol list, which lists each locus by its approved symbol in alphabetical order, is also arranged better than before. Sometimes the symbol is not so obvious as to allow one to find a particular phenotype from the list itself, but one can always use the main index and get the symbol from the entry in the book. This also provides the reference(s) on which the map position is based.

The section dealing with molecular defects in Mendelian disorders has been simplified. This has evolved out of various different listings over the last few editions, and now has a single list of about 400 disorders in alphabetical order. Included for the first time is a column for the intragenic lesion classified