posium BIOTECH RIA '88 held in Florence in April 1988. The text is divided into three sections, the first, 'Molecular probes in genetic diseases', describes new methodologies aimed at improving the detection of genetic defects. Frequent reference is made to the now familiar polymerase chain reaction (PCR) method of DNA amplification, showing the powerful potential of this technique in a range of diagnostic situations from the detection of molecular defects in β thalassaemia (Boehm *et al*) to the detection of hepatitis B viral DNA sequences in the monitoring of antiviral therapy (Larzul *et al*). The paper on Duchenne and Becker muscular dystrophy (Ommen *et al*), although missing PCR deletion detection methods, is a good, brief, but comprehensive overview of developments in DMD and BMD. The genetic analysis of hyperlipidaemia (Humphries *et al*) provides a useful insight into the study of a polygenic disorder at the molecular level.

The second part, 'Molecular probes in infectious diseases', focuses mainly on HIV studies and includes new diagnostic assays and methods of sero-epidemiological characterisation of the infection; again PCR emerges as a detection method of choice. Sensitive antibody screening assays are described, based primarily on the use of viral recombinant antigens produced in quantity and to a high degree of purity by using ingenious high level expression vector systems containing temperature sensitive repressors (Papas *et al*).

The third part, 'Molecular probes on solid tumors', presents data on the diagnostic, prognostic, and therapeutic use of monoclonal antibodies (MAbs) in the treatment of human tumours. Riesfield describes the promising potential use and problems of developing immunoconjugates between MAbs (directed to tumour associated antigens) and chemotherapeutic drugs or toxins, and Kageshita *et al* present encouraging data on the development of specific immunotherapy using anti-idiotypic antibodies made possible largely by recent advances in hybridoma methodology. Optimal combinations of various therapeutic regimens would seem necessary for effective tumour therapy since experiments and clinical trials with single agents, for example, cytokines (Hermann *et al*), have been disappointing. Pierotti and Porta present a useful review of DNA probes and cancer, including examples where analysis with DNA probes has contributed to the diagnosis and/or prognosis of certain solid tumours by showing oncogene alteration, tumour specific oncogene amplification, or allele loss in certain tumours.

Overall, the papers are presented in an easily readable, clear, concise style with good illustrations, and assume only a peripheral knowledge of the areas covered. With the obvious reservation that any publication in the rapidly advancing field of molecular genetics can date with alarming rapidity, this well referenced mini review approach to the molecular probe phenomena provides a useful, broad based source of information for scientists and clinicians alike.

JOHN F HARVEY

NOTICES

The Joint Convention of the 5th International Child Neurology Congress and the 3rd Asian and Oceanian Congress of Child Neurology

This convention will take place at the Keio Plaza Inter-Continental Hotel, Tokyo, Japan on Sunday 4 to Friday 7 November 1990. For further information contact President: Dr Yukio Fukuyama, Department of Pediatrics, Tokyo Women's Medical College, 8–1 Kawadacho, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 162, Japan. Tel: 81-3-353-8111, or Secretariat: Dr Yoshiyuki Suzuki, Secretary General, 5th ICNC–3rd AOCCN, The Tokyo Metropolitan Institute of Medical Science, 3-18-22 Honkomagome, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 113, Japan. Tel: 81-3-823-2101.

Genetics of Hearing Impairment

The New York Academy of Sciences and The Deafness Research Foundation are holding a meeting on 'Genetics of Hearing Impairment' on 24 to 26 September 1990 at the Sheraton Center, New York City. For further information contact: Conference Department, The New York Academy of Sciences, 2 East 63rd Street, New York, NY 10021, USA. Tel: 212-838-0230.