

BOOK REVIEWS

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Human Gene Mapping 11. The Eleventh International Workshop on Human Gene Mapping. Ed Ellen Solomon, Chris Rawlings. (Pp VIII + 2200; £259.60.) Basel: Karger. 1992. (*Cytogenet Cell Genet* 1991;58:Nos 1-4, 1-2200.)

This report, contained in two volumes and amounting to 2200 pages in all, represents both a landmark and perhaps the end of an era. Since the report of the first human gene mapping workshop held in 1973, successive volumes have faithfully charted the development of the emerging human gene map, from the fragmentary data based on protein markers of the 1970s, through the explosion of new information from DNA markers in the 1980s, to the present situation where every chromosome has a map that is at least an outline, while in some cases it is already detailed.

The 1991 London meeting is likely to have been the last in the traditional form, where the heroic efforts of chromosome committee chairmen and behind the scenes computer staff allowed a combination of data entry, synthesis, and presentation and resulted in a unique flavour which was certainly exciting to those directly involved, though perhaps unnecessarily frenetic to those attending mainly as observers. The detailed and usually dry format of the reports has hidden (wisely) the emotion and exhaustion engendered by computer failures (remarkably lacking in the London workshop), disputes as to whether assignments were proven or provisional, and (inevitably) the question of appropriate nomenclature. While some of these issues will continue to arise in future individual chromosome workshops, the international camaraderie (and rivalries) and the general sense of a map painfully emerging before one's eyes will be missed by all dedicated gene mappers.

The first of the two volumes in this report begins with a catalogue of mapped genes which essentially represents the overall summary of our current knowledge on actual genes, as opposed to anonymous DNA segments. At 2325 genes, with the list covering 90 pages, this shows what a considerable way we have come, even though this total represents only around 5% of the estimated 50 000 human genes. The rest of volume 1 is entirely occupied by the report of the individual chromosome committees, with brief text reports indicating new information and tables giving the details of known genes and markers on each chromosome, representing an essential source of information for workers on any specific chromosome. Looking to the future it is this part that will largely become replaced by on line and continually updated databases.

Volume 2 contains the chapters from the committees dealing with clinical disorders, chromosomes and neoplasia, comparative mapping, and mitochondrial DNA, among others; it also has the abstracts of posters shown at the meeting. It is this volume that will be most valuable to clinicians and scientists in genetics overall, as opposed to gene mappers, though much space is also occupied by lists of anonymous DNA segments. The clinical report has relied extensively on the French Genatlas, which actually presents information in a way much more suited to workers on diseases than is the case with the rest of the volume.

A few points can be criticised in this report: from the viewpoint of the clinical geneticist it is supremely user unfriendly, despite the attempts of the clinical committee's report to overcome this – but then the workshops were never really aimed at those interested in genetic disease, even though clinically orientated workers formed an increasing proportion of those involved. Those who wonder by what miracle of production such a massive report on a meeting in August 1991 could be published by the end of the year (when only received for publication on 23 December) will be disappointed: it actually appeared in April 1992. Hopefully this will not presage a new policy of editors to try and improve their image of rapid publication and establish the priority of their authors by backdating all their books and journals!

Such criticisms should not detract from the value of this report, whose volumes will (and in the reviewer's case already are) much more often be found in use on someone's desk or bench than sitting on a shelf. If this is indeed a report on the last Human Gene Mapping workshop, then this is an occasion to salute not only the publishers and editors, but the whole of the devoted, disparate, and idiosyncratic community of gene mappers from many countries who have taken this field from its origins to its present flowering. Let us hope that, with commercial interests, robots, and politicians lurking in the wings to take over the human genome project, the spark of individuality which has characterised the field of gene mapping until now will be neither lost nor forgotten.

PETER S HARPER

The Cystic Kidney. Ed K D Gardner Jr, J Bernstein. (Pp 444; £95.00.) Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers. 1992.

Renal cysts, a common finding in clinical practice, occur in a multitude of inherited and acquired conditions. This multi-disciplinary book is an important contribution that will be a useful resource for those with an interest in renal cysts and the disorders with which they are associated. The editors have organised the text to carry the reader from an understanding of the structure and pathogenesis of renal cysts through to the diseases that are associated with renal cyst formation. They have also taken care with the selection of contributors, all of whom are well known from their previous contributions to renal cystic publications.

The clear structure of the book together with detailed, well referenced text makes it useful for a relatively wide audience. It has an obvious appeal to clinicians who will find

great utility in this resource which provides numerous insights into the pathology, pathogenesis, genetics, diagnosis, and management of cystic kidney disease. The focus on management is particularly useful. High quality reproduction of photomicrographs and renal imaging further increase the utility of this book. Those involved in renal cystic research will also appreciate the perspective provided by this book in which the results of recent research have been well integrated into the wider clinical picture. This is particularly in evidence with the focus given to advances that have come from the application of human molecular genetics. However, fast moving developments in molecular biology mean that this section is quickly changing into an interesting piece of history.

While the numerous contributors have provided a useful depth of analysis, there is also an occasional conflict of opinion that is instructive to the reader. One small price for the benefits of having multiple contributors is a tendency for repetition. Overall, this collection of essays is an excellent summary of contemporary knowledge about renal cysts and the conditions in which they occur. For those with either a patient based or research based interest in renal cystic disease, this book is a rich resource that is strongly recommended.

DAVID RAVINE

Polycystic Kidney Disease. Contributions to Nephrology Vol 97. Ed M H Breuning, M Devoto, G Romeo. (Pp 142; £61.80.) Basel: Karger. 1992.

Funding from the Commission of the European Communities, Directorate Biology (COMAC-BIO) to generate close collaboration between research groups working on polycystic kidney disease was the stimulus behind this collection of review articles and research papers. Each paper was presented at the 2nd International Workshop of the European Concerted Action Towards Prevention of Renal Failure caused by Polycystic Kidney Disease, Parma, September 1991.

The stated aim of the workshop was to bring together researchers adopting diverse approaches towards polycystic kidney disease. As someone who did not attend the workshop, I found that these written proceedings do reflect this aim. The contributions include reviews of clinical interventions that have potential to slow down the deterioration of kidney function, a review of several experimental models of cystic kidney disease, including more recent transgenic and chimaeric mice models as well as animal models showing dominantly inherited cystic disease. The pathogenesis of cysts is reviewed, as is the current knowledge surrounding the molecular genetics of PKD1. The important issue of genetic heterogeneity is addressed, while some attention was focused on the advances in molecular and computing tools that will be of assistance in future studies on polycystic kidney disease.

Overall, this publication is a useful collection of papers that is an informative current resource for both clinicians and research workers with an interest in autosomal dominant polycystic kidney disease.

DAVID RAVINE