
Each year since 1970 a new volume of Advances in Human Genetics has appeared, edited every year by Harry Harris and Kurt Hirschorn and every year containing five or six reviews. It must be difficult picking topics which are interesting but not too fast moving for the inevitable slow book production process. Four of the five articles in this volume have suffered from the pedagogical importance of their subjects, for instance, of the two articles on human genetics does it seem the better job of covering a wide field at a consistent level. But if you happen to want an encyclopedic review of lipoproteins and, for instance, on, in trinucleotide repeats, or, until this year, on retinoblastoma or oncogenes. Advances in Human Genetics does not attempt to do a very in-depth job of reviewing the literature, but in doing so they do so in a style which is clear, well referenced and to the point.

Andrew P Read


Mutation remains both the major intellectual problem in its decipherment and interpretation: it presents the major practical problem of the detection of mutants and the protection of our future. Some authors have assumed that loci were few and alleles few or absent, and that mutation rates were equal at all loci and from all alleles, and equal in man, mouse, and fly, the basis for the expectation of a constant rate of death in the course of a life expectancy, were defined by Haldane, Fisher, Wright, and Muller. These firm theoretical foundations are now known to have a somewhat tenuous reality to them.