BOOK REVIEWS

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The Neurofibromatosis: A Pathogenetic and Clinical Review. Ed S M Huson, R A C Hughes. (Pp 485; £79.00.) London: Chapman & Hall Medical Publications. 1994.

The editors of this fine text book have assembled a formidable array of world experts on neurofibromatosis and the end product is an extremely good clinical, pathological, and molecular review of the neurofibromatosis. The book is well referenced and illustrated with some very fine pictures and radiological images. Reviews on molecular genetics of NF1 and NF2 by Francis Collins and Guy Rouleau respectively are extensive and include the recent cloning of the NF2 gene. There are also useful chapters on the clinical and genetic aspects of NF1 and NF2.

For those who are interested in the cell biology and pathology of these conditions, there are chapters on neural crest migration and differentiation, schwann cell biology and pathology. For the surgeon there are chapters on orthopaedic manifestations and reconstructive surgery in NF and the overall result is a very well rounded and structured publication.

My only real criticism of the book is that it leaves the reader a little confused as to the result of the debate on what the elephant man was supposed to have. There are two completely opposed chapters which argue the case for the elephant man having NF1 and proteus syndrome. Although there is a little guide by the editors in the preface stating that they really do not believe the elephant man did have NF1, the inclusion of these chapters, although of great interest, only help to keep the debate warm and that may hamper us in trying to persuade anxious persons with this disease that they are not going to end up looking like Joseph Merrick.

Nevertheless, the inclusion of the chapters does add extra spice to what is already an extremely readable and useful guide to neurofibromatosis. I would therefore whole-

heartedly recommend this text to anyone with more than a passing interest in this disease and at £79.00 I feel that this is not overpriced.

GARETH EVANS

Causes of Diabetes: Genetic and Environmental Factors. Ed RDG Leslie. (Pp 355; £60.00.) London: John Wiley. 1993.

A long standing interest in diabetes, and particularly its causation, meant that it was a pleasure to dip into this contribution. Diabetes represents a substantial complex of disorders. The aetiology of most forms of diabetes remains unclear, but a review of recent progress in research is certainly timely. For a clinical geneticist who attempts to remain abreast of molecular genetic developments in diabetes, perhaps the most compelling components of this work came in the chapters on the non-genetic causes of the disease.

The book, edited by David Leslie, has contributions from many authoritative and active researchers. The text is divided into two principal sections, the first dealing with IDDM or type I diabetes and the second with non-insulin dependent diabetes mellitus or type II diabetes. Each of the sections begins with an overview of genetic aspects of disease causation. These provide a useful springboard for the data that follow. Subsequent chapters place emphasis on the interaction between genetic and non-genetic factors. In reality, we know so very little of the mechanisms of such interactions. Accordingly, these chapters engage the reader in epidemiological reviews. Sections on viral, nutritional, and other toxins implicated in the aetiology of diabetes were well rounded. The explosion of suspicion for a viral trigger in IDDM, particularly for Coxsackie viral infection, during the late 1970s has now apparently mellowed. However, the rather ominous increase in IDDM incidence continues and is presumed to be because of environmental factors.

Of significant developments, the identification of mutations within the glucokinase gene in those interesting, but relatively infrequent families with early onset, non-insulin requiring diabetes (MODY) is given only brief mention. Since these observations constitute the first insight into the molecular basis of disordered glucose homeostasis, the brevity may seem surprising and a little disappointing. The other notable absentee is the application of mouse genetics to mapping of human disease. While still unproven, and with obvious limitation for extrapolation to humans, the localisation of gene loci in the non-obese diabetic mouse (NOD) has given fresh impetus to disease gene mapping in genetically complex disorders.

Overall the editor has demanded clarity and simplicity from the contributors in their assessment of basic observations. While particularly helpful for non-scientific readers, the text may be considered a little bland for the researcher with considerable background knowledge. However, if you buy the book quickly, albeit at £60, you will obtain a useful and up to date reference source.

RICHARD TREMBATH

NOTICES

Ares Serono International Symposium: Where Phenotype Does Not Match Genotype

This Symposium will be held on 13-14 October 1994 in Volterra, Italy, Cassa di Risparmio. Information: Maria I New, MD, Scientific Secretary, The New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center, 525 E 68th Street, Room N-236, New York, NY 10021, USA. Tel: (212) 746-3450; Fax: (212) 746-0300. A limited number of free communications will be accepted for poster presentation.

Cycling out of Control

Nature's Second International Conference in Europe "Cycling out of Control" will be held on 1-2 December 1994 at Hotel Lutetia, Paris. Conference details: Pippa Burnett, Tel: +44 (0)71 836 6633 x 2593, Fax: +44 (0)71 379 5417. Media enquiries: Lisa Jackson, Tel: +44 (0)71 872 0104, Fax: +44 (0)71 240 2408.

French Society of Human Genetics

We are pleased to announce the annual meeting of the French Society of Human Genetics to be held on 14 December 1994 at Hôpital des Enfants Malades in Paris. The scientific programme includes uniparental disomy and the phacomatoses. We are soliciting submissions for oral presentations. If you wish to present your research at this meeting, please send an abstract not later than 3 November 1994 to Professor Claude Stoll. For more information contact Professor Claude Stoll, Institut de Puériculture, Service de Génétique Médicale, 23 rue de la Porte de l'Hôpital, 67091 Strasbourg Cédex, France. Tel: (33) 88.16.10.12. Fax: (33) 88.16.13.30.