human prion diseases (Collinge and Palmer) in particular show how we are only just beginning to understand the relationships between genotype and phenotype.

From the point of clinical applicability, the discussion, in the chapter on the muscular dystrophies (Bushby), on the use of dystrophin DNA and protein analyses in suspected Xp21 dystrophy patients, carriers, and at risk pregnancies, is likely to be of particular interest.

In addition to the expected topics of Alzheimer's disease, prion diseases, movement disorders, ataxias, neuropathies, neuropathies (spinal muscular atrophies), mitochondrial diseases, muscular dystrophies, and myotonias three chapters cover disorders where the genetic component is less well understood, the epilepsies, multiple sclerosis, and neurological tumours. The last of these does include brief discussions on the genetic neurocutaneous syndromes but it deals largely with the molecular genetics of sporadic neurological tumours. These are too often omitted from texts discussing neurological genetics, and this chapter provides a valuable detailed discussion on the roles of chromosome loss and gene mutations (p 53) in specific CNS tumours.

All of the 12 chapters are as current as the publication date of August 1994 allowed. Indeed the only major additions/updates a clinical neurologist is likely to need are Machado-Joseph disease, which was recently appended to the list of trinucleotide repeat expansions affecting the CNS, the gene for Emery-Dreifuss muscular dystrophy, and the gene(s?) for the autosomal recessive spinal muscular atrophies of childhood.

There appear to be very few typographical errors, the most notable being the substitution

of heterozygotes for homozygotes at one point in the description of the modifying effect of codon 129 status on age at onset for inherited prion diseases (p 248).

Overall this volume has much to commend it, including the price. It should certainly be read once by clinical geneticists (and neurologists) especially if they feel the need to "catch up" on the recent past advances in the molecular genetics of the major groups of inherited neurological diseases.

JOHN MACMILLAN

Textbook of Fetal Physiology. Editors G D Thorburn, R Harding. (Pp 468; £65.00.) Oxford: Oxford Medical Publications. 1994. ISBN 0198577486.

The preface to this excellent volume states that it aims to act as a companion to the classical texts on adult physiology for medical training at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. In fact it fills an important niche in the market owing to the paucity of readable books on human fetal development and physiology. Indeed there is also a rapidly increasing demand for this type of general textbook from human molecular geneticists. As the combined efforts of human genome project related research generate an ever expanding list of cloned genes associated with specific human diseases, the task remains of elucidating how any gene product actually causes the associated disease. Inevitably questions of gene expression during development arise. The textbook of fetal physiology will provide a valuable reference book for molecular and cell biologists asking these questions.

The book has chapters from a large number of contributors on topics ranging from placental function, through development of individual organ systems and physiological mechanisms, ending with chapters on maternal aspects of pregnancy. For each organ system a first chapter addresses the embryological, structural, and cellular aspects of development. One or more subsequent chapters then address an important physiological function of that organ system. Hence, the chapter on development of the respiratory system is followed by a chapter on fetal lung maturation, and that on renal function is accompanied by one on fetal fluid balance. There is a particularly extensive section on different aspects of development of the nervous system. The book is well illustrated and readable and will undoubtedly be a useful addition to many medical and basic science bookshelves.

ANN HARRIS

NOTICE

Gene Therapy

The 3rd International Karger Symposium on Gene Therapy will be held on 22-24 October 1995 in Basel, Switzerland. For further information contact: S Karger AG, Congress Secretariat, PO Box, CH-4009 Basel, Switzerland. Tel: +41/61/306 11 11, fax: +41/61/306 14 34.