similar proportion of the participants originating from either the USA or Canada.

Here is an in depth coverage of the entire field of elastic tissue biology with state of the art information on topics such as biophysics, ultrastructure, elastin gene organisation, modifying enzymes, transgenic mice with elastin deletions, and the microfibrillar protein fibrillin 1. Coverage is also given to elastin regulation, histological changes in hypertension, and tumour biology. The range of topics mirrors most of those recently addressed in the 1995 Gordon Conference on the same topic. This book, of course, is available to a very wide audience whereas the Gordon Conferences, by their very nature, have a very limited audience.

Two important additions would have made this book even more valuable to an even wider audience. Firstly, a chapter on elastin related diseases would have been extremely valuable. While these are mentioned at various places throughout the book, the molecular pathology of disorders such as Williams syndrome, supravalvular aortic stenosis, cutis laxa, Marfan syndrome, PXE, Buschke-Ollendorf syndrome, aortic aneurysms, emphysema, etc, would have been a very valuable focus. After all, the first Williams mutations were described in 1993 and Marfan syndrome analyses have exploded since the gene sequence was published in 1991. Secondly, it would have been useful to have had a separate chapter on microfibrillar components other than lysyl oxidase and fibrillin. Microfibrils are important components of elastic fibres and include proteins such as MAGP, MFAP1, collagen VI, etc, in some of which the gene organisation resembles the fibrillin.

Nevertheless, the book will be of substantial interest to basic scientists interested in the field of connective tissue biology and also contains much interesting information for clinicians researching into connective tissue biology. Those with specific syndromic interests, however, are perhaps less well catered for, but the book is certainly a valuable addition to departmental libraries and large medical libraries should buy a copy.

F M POPE

Genetics and You. John F Jackson. (Pp 92; $9.50 pb.) USA: The Humana Press. 1995. ISBN 0-896-03330-9.

The aim of this short book is "to provide basic information about genetic disorders in a useful form for those who have no special training in genetics". Unfortunately, it fails to do this, giving genetic information in dry, technical terms and failing to address the wider, relevant issues. The starting point is medicine, rather than people's lives.

I will give some examples which speak for themselves. The chapter on prenatal diagnosis fails to address the difference between screening and diagnostic tests, the meaning of positive and negative results, or the psychological issues of anxiety and false reassurance. We are told: "The very slight risk of complications for mother and fetus from CVS is slightly higher than for amniocentesis. Technical error is higher for CVS". We are not told what these risks are nor what their implications are. But we are told: "There is probably a higher risk for Rh sensitisation by CVS, requiring use of Rho GAM injections for R-negative mothers". Only the term CVS is explained.

Carrier risk is explained: "The carrier risk for an apparently normal sibling of an affected person married to a nonrelative becomes 2/3, times the population carrier rate for the spouse, times one in four for an affected child if both parents are carriers. For CF, for example, the risk would be $2/3 \times 1/5 \times 1/4 = 1/150$, or in card cutting terms: one ace of hearts in three decks of cards."

The chapter on the new genetics starts with RFLPs and PCRs and goes on to explain why genetics is relevant to organ transplantation: "There is a series of genes lined up on chromosome 6 called the major histocompatibility complex (MHC) or simply the HLA region. There are separate genes at five loci, with an enormous number of possibilities. The HLA-A locus has at least 20 different genes, and the B locus has more than 40. There is an additional series of genes at the C, D, and DR loci." The issues of gene transfer and cloning are equally obscure: "Sometimes it is harmful, as in the transfer of a gene from animal to virus to make an oncogene capable of causing cancer. On the other hand, the entry of a single-cellular organism into the cells of higher organisms during evolution produced the mitochondrion", and "The cloning of a human analogous to that of frogs could be possible down the road."

Social and ethical issues are hardly referred to: "Heated debate has resulted from screening programs in the past and much has been learned". We are not told what the debate has been about nor what has been learned.

I make no apology for giving these quotes, the product of a clinical geneticist of 30 years' experience trying to communicate to the non-geneticist. While this review is unlikely to encourage people to buy this book, I hope it will encourage them to think about how we can better achieve the increasingly important task of communicating about genetic issues to non-geneticists. This is a multidisciplinary task, and would benefit from the expertise of those involved in the social and behavioural sciences, the public understanding of science, developing educational curricula, as well as communications using computer software.

SUSAN MICHIE

NOTICE

Fifth Annual Meeting of the International Genetic Epidemiology Society

This meeting will be held on 16–18 August 1996 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in conjunction with the 9th International Congress of Human Genetics. For further information, please contact Dr Ruth Ottman, Columbia University, New York, telephone (212) 305–9188, fax (212) 305–2426.

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