principle, I would suggest running the databases on the best PC system you can get.

The screens are much clearer, and it is much easier to switch between syndromes, references, and selected items. The photographs appear as a thumbnail on one side of the screen, and can be enlarged simply by clicking with the mouse, provided that the photo library CD-ROM is in the CD-ROM drive. The printing options are more straightforward and allow previewing what you want to print, rather than realising with horror than you have accidentally printed the entire details of a selection of 150 syndromes. The facility of adding your own unclassified cases to the databases, which was available in previous DOS versions, has been removed. There are good help screens, which are now more useful than a manual that is relatively unchanged from former editions. My one minor gripe is that when searching for a specific indexed feature, for example "hypertelorism", the programme tells you that "hypertelorism" is present, but not whether it is listed under "face", "cranium", or any other group of features.

However, the improvements are not just in presentation and ease of use. The number of photographs has increased greatly, and new case descriptions of malformation syndromes have been added. The relative merits of lumping or splitting closely related syndromes are as hot a topic as ever. There are more entries on chromosomal disomy, which are very useful, although not strictly the domain of a dysmorphology database. The transition of several syndromes from a cluster of clinical features to a molecular genetic abnormality is well covered, with good summaries of molecular genetic events in

craniosynostosis syndromes and many others. Recent review articles on clinical or molecular genetic advances in syndromes are all cited. The depth of the databases emphasises the continuing need for accurate classification of syndromes, even in the age of molecular genetic diagnosis.

I would wholeheartedly recommend this software package as an essential tool for every clinical genetic service. The breadth of experience and insight of the authors can be brought into every genetic clinic. The presentation is a great improvement over previous editions, and the updated abstracts, references, and photographs provide enormous help in the ever difficult problem of the diagnosis of rare syndromes.

ANDREW GREEN

Molecular Biology of Cancer. F Macdonald, C H J Ford. (£19.95, US\$ 39.95 pb.) UK: BIOS Scientific Publishers. 1996. ISBN 1-85996-225-4.

The first edition of this book was called *Oncogenes and Tumour Suppressor Genes* and the preface to this sequel points out the major advances in knowledge in this field necessitating a change in title in this version as well as many other major changes. The aims in the preface are clear and the authors have achieved their goal, aiming the text at students and practitioners of medicine without specialist knowledge of genetics and similarly at postgraduate scientists with an interest in the subject. With this stated audience in mind, the content and layout are easy to follow but sufficiently comprehensive to give a broad outline as well as some depth.

The illustrations are plentiful, simple, and useful and references are comprehensive.

The first chapter sets down some general principles and the next three consider the three broad classes of cancer related genes: the oncogenes, tumour suppressor genes, and the control and repair genes. The next seven chapters approach cancer genes in a systems orientated way. These chapters include information about sporadic carcinogenesis, molecular mechanisms, molecular and cytogenetic prognostic indices, as well as relevant descriptions of hereditary cancer predisposition syndromes which enable molecular genetic investigations to be set in context. Areas of controversy and uncertainty are covered where relevant without unhelpful diversions.

Cancer is an area in which gene therapy may potentially be useful and the current status, challenges, and future possibilities are covered in the next chapter. All the detailed methodology is collected together in the final section to facilitate the even flow of the book, and again the illustrations and explanations are pitched at just the right level.

This is a useful text for those embarking, for example, on research into the molecular biology of cancer or becoming involved in diagnostic testing either in the laboratory or the clinic. Although there is no intention of giving comprehensive information about clinical conditions and diagnoses, there is sufficient information to set in context genetic testing in cancer, which is likely to prove useful to oncologists, geneticists in training, and other clinicians interested to increase their understanding of this ever widening subject.

DIANA M ECCLES