variety syndromes in which mental deficiency figures is considered by G. Koch. Koch also contributes a full section on the epilepsies, and this covers the genetic findings in electroencephalography, and there are also clinical and pathological studies on laboratory animals. A shorter section on neuroses and psychopathies contributed by E. Strömgren is sufficiently up to date to include the reports on the XYY anomaly in criminal offenders. E. Zerbin-Rüdin, who contributed the section on idiopathic mental deficiency, is also responsible for the sections on atrophies of the brain and on endogenous psychoses: the genetic aspects in these difficult spheres are discussed critically.

As in the earlier volumes of this Handbook, the production is worthy of the contributors’ and the editor’s outstanding efforts.

ARNOLD SORSBY


Dr. Pratt’s book fills a gap in English medical literature. Over the past century, clinicians have provided a rich but chaotic account of heredodegenerative and familial disorders affecting the nervous system, and a treatise was badly needed that would provide both a systematic account and a critical discussion of relevant world literature. Here we have both. This monograph is essentially a catalogue of most of the known genetically determined disorders as they affect the central nervous system, but inevitably a measure of selection has been applied—thus a discussion of muscular dystrophies is included because it comes within the purview of the neurologist, but inborn metabolic errors, such as Hartnup’s disease, are dealt with very briefly because of their absorbing interest to workers in other disciplines and because they are dealt with adequately elsewhere. And yet perhaps these metabolic disorders are a paradigm for our understanding of most of the conditions described here, since they are probably also biochemically determined. Dr. Pratt deals with his subject from the standpoint of the clinician and not from that of the biochemist, but in doing so is somewhat unreserved in his acceptance of the clinical assertions of others. Of course, this is inevitable in reviewing ancient descriptions of obscure disorders (and in contemporary medicine, ‘ancient’ means anything more than 15 years old, the subject matter of at least one-third of the contents of the bibliography).

Most of the clinical descriptions are deliberately brief, yet for an intelligent understanding of what is written here, a clinical appraisal is essential, and actual first-hand experience very desirable. The reader is not spared the need to read original articles but this is facilitated by a comprehensive bibliography of over 2800 references. This synoptic approach is wholly justifiable otherwise the treatise would have been very lengthy and perhaps turgid.

I have no major disagreement to cite. In the discussion of epilepsy, it is a pity that the more recent studies of Onsted and his colleagues (Clinics in Developmental Medicine, No. 22, 1966) relating temporal lobe epilepsy in childhood to febrile convulsions are not mentioned, because they may prove to be important, not only from the therapeutic standpoint, but also in genetic counselling in this disease which is still bemused by old wives’ tales. It is a pity, too, that, particularly in the so-called atio- trophic disorders, there is no discussion of the age-specific data available for estimating the risk to siblings, but it must be recognized that often there is an abysmal lack of reliable information for such computations, anyway.

Inevitably there are difficulties over classification and nomenclature, arising out of the differing interpretation of others’ findings. It is becoming abundantly clear that the traditional clinical and even neuropathological features are not sufficiently discriminatory to provide any fundamental differentiation. Yet these parameters have provided the material for wearingly uncritical discussion for over half a century, and of course Dr. Pratt has been obliged (for the time being) to work within this very limited framework. One hopes that biochemical advances in the next two or three decades will be such that, in future classifications of hereditary neurological disorders, we will have the advantage of a more basic understanding of the various disease processes, and that this monograph will thus be eclipsed (but not redundant). The duration of its pre-eminence will be a useful measure of the rate of progress in neurology. In the meantime, diseases that are genetically determined, directly or indirectly, form such a large and often unsuspected part of neurological practice, that all neurologists should possess this book—I assume that clinical geneticists will have it already.

JOHN WILSON


McKusick’s little volume is an excellent introduction to human genetics in general. Two introductory chapters deal with the basic aspects of chromosomes and genes in inheritance. Of the remaining chapters two deal with the gene in individuals—bringing in oral matters as protein structure and enzyme deficiencies—and genes in differentiation and development. Two further chapters deal with the gene in families and in populations; the necessary elementary mathematics being most adequately covered. The three concluding chapters deal with genetics in relation to evolution, medicine, and society. Both the arrangement of the text and the presentation of the matter are imaginative and attractive.
**Lectures in Medical Genetics** are a series given to the faculty and students of the Northwestern University Medical School at Chicago. Dr. Hsia and nine of his colleagues cover a very wide field in the twelve lectures recorded here. Six of these are devoted to clinical aspects: mendelian genetics, genetics problems (such as mutation, linkage, multifactorial inheritance, and non-nuclear inheritance), and population genetics being dealt with by H. M. Slatis, while the Editor himself deals with molecular disturbances, enzyme defects, and the place of genetics in clinical practice. The theoretical aspects of present-day human genetics are covered by the two opening sections of this book, morphological genetics being discussed in chapters on the structure of the cell, the life cycle of the cell and chromosomal structure, while the section on biochemical genetics gives clear accounts of protein biosynthesis and the expression of gene mutation. Students should find this book informative and stimulating.

**ARNOLD SORSBY**


It is rare to find a technical book which has nothing to recommend it; this book comes dangerously close to that rarity. In part the blame rests with the publisher for offering a translation which is sometimes incomprehensible. A quaint example occurs on p. 132 where the kinetocentre is described as a structure ‘which sometimes shines a little and seems to be the very source of this radiation’; at prophase or therabouts—the language is a little ambiguous—‘we can well recognize the radiation also on the living object’ but by anaphase ‘the radiation dims down progressively...’. It seems that the author is trying to describe the mitotic spindle and its asters which show lines of protoplasm which ‘radiate’ from the spindle poles; he is not talking of a source of illumination.

Apart from the poor translation it is not clear why this book was translated at all. There are many books which present the material it covers more accurately, with less bias and with greater lucidity. The dogmatism shown in the text, and the distortion of the published literature on the subject can only prove misleading to the elementary reader and irritating to the more advanced student.

**J. CHAYEN**


This small volume describes an experimental model for viral oncolysis of transplanted tumour cells. Strain A2G mice, naturally resistant to WSA, a tumour-adapted strain of influenza virus, are grafted with an ascites tumour (either Ehrlich, Krebs-2, or Sarcoma 180). Oncolysis is subsequently induced by WSA infection. Mice surviving oncolysis, and free of tumour, are immune to subsequent challenge with any of these three tumours. The sera of immune mice contain an agglutinin for the tumour cells—and admixture of such sera with tumour cells prevents tumour takes on subsequent inoculation into normal animals—the authors call this passive immunity!

Homogenates of virus-infected tumours will induce immunity in fresh animals, whereas single lysates of tumour cells will not. The authors speculate (pp. 74–5) on the possible application of these discoveries to the therapy of human tumours but suggest that ‘...the following highly hypothetical conditions should be fulfilled: the tumour to be treated should possess vulnerable antigenic targets, and the host should be able to respond to adequate antigenic stimulation’.

**R. J. C. HARRIS**

**The Chicago Conference 1966: Standardization in Human Cytogenetics**

This Conference was held on the occasion of the Third International Congress of Human Genetics in September 1966 at the University of Chicago to consider the results of and the problems arising from the rapid growth in knowledge of human cytogenetics during the past six years. This has led to difficulties both in the communication of results and the uniform reporting of data.

A Report of this Conference has just been published by the National Foundation—New York, together with reprints of both the Denver and London Conferences and Addenda.

The system of nomenclature proposed by the members of the Chicago Conference should permit greater ease and precision in communicating human karyotype data. Furthermore, the shorthand notation should be readily adaptable to automated data processing and information retrieval systems.

Contributors to this journal are strongly urged to familiarize themselves with this system and to make use of it where practicable. Use however will not be a prerequisite for publications in the Journal of Medical Genetics. Editors may, however, recommend its use where they consider that as a result clarity would be increased.

The Report has been circulated by the National Foundation to all those on its mailing lists, and further reprints of this Report are obtainable free of charge from the Medical Department, The National Foundation-March of Dimes, 800 Second Avenue, New York, N.Y., 10017, U.S.A.

**JOHN L. HAMERTON**