
This large and expensive book is probably the most comprehensive so far produced on the subject of blood groups. Not only do the authors deal with the genetic and serological characteristics of the groups of both red and white cells, but they also deal with their medico-legal aspects and the relationships of blood groups to disease. In addition, a very large section of the book (170 pages) is devoted to the chemistry of the blood groups' substances, and the inherited groups detected in serum also receive considerable attention.

The authors have tried to incorporate in one volume what has formerly been the subject matter of several books. Even though it is useful to have one volume with such a wide spectrum, the result can be that none of the aspects are dealt with adequately. In this book, the section on the chemistry of the blood group substances is its best feature. In many of the other sections the treatment is too superficial to be of much value other than as a source of references for further reading.

The authors have tried to steer a middle course between the Rh nomenclature of Fisher-Race and that of Wiener, and, in fact, both nomenclatures are used. The result is that, to be fully comprehensible, the reader has to understand both nomenclatures, thus limiting the usefulness of the section on Rh to a highly-specialized minority, who will already be fully conversant with what is in the section.

The section on blood groups and disease takes 32 pages, and is thus one of the longest reviews of the subject. It is largely taken up with detailed criticisms of the many ridiculous associations that have been claimed. This leads the authors to a general condemnation of the whole subject. Very little space is given to the few firmly-based relationships, and only one paragraph and a table is given to the relationship with duodenal ulcer, the well-established relationship with non-secretor receiving only cursory mention. The authors find it 'interesting that there have been no definite counter-arguments disputing the increased incidence of O in duodenal ulcer subjects'. The main value of the chapter on blood groups and disease is the very full discussion on the possible relationships with various infections. Most of the research in this field has been carried out in Germany, and this review is most useful.

This book is essentially a translation of the second German edition (1966), and this is all too apparent throughout most of the text. It is mainly in the last couple of paragraphs of each chapter that there is reference to later developments. For instance, there is no mention of cytotoxic leucocyte antibodies, and the only reference to the work carried out on the prevention of Rh immunization by giving prophylactic anti-D gammaglobulin is to be found in the last paragraph of the chapter on incomplete antibodies. The work would be considerably out of date if it were not for these additional paragraphs incorporating developments up to 1968.