subject that deserves to be brought to the attention of those outwith the mucosal immunology field and it is likely that several significant developments in vaccinology will emerge from the studies included in this treatise. However, its price will keep it off many bookshelves.

C. G. GEMMELL

Biotherapeutic Agents and Infectious Diseases


There is now much interest in non-antibiotic agent-based therapeutic options, but often a paucity of hard evidence for the effectiveness of such approaches. Concerns about antimicrobial resistance will inevitably fuel further attention on probiotics; therefore it is useful to gather together the available and increasing data on these therapeutic modalities. This book is directed at 'pharmacists, internists, gastroenterologists, specialists in infectious diseases, gynaecologists and representatives of the pharmaceutical industry' and aims to review concisely the scientific background for and the applications of biotherapeutic agents to human therapy.

The book was published in 1999 and yet the three sample chapters which I read on mechanisms of action of biotherapeutic agents, antibiotic-associated diarrhoea and Clostridium difficile-associated disease contain references only up to 1996 (plus one paper submitted in 1997), one from 1997 and two from 1997 (out of 160), respectively. This is disappointing given the aims of the book, but reflects the often interminable lag time between manuscript production and book release. Furthermore, this delay has meant that new important information is missing; for example, recent evidence of the relatedness of Saccharomyces cerevisiae and Saccharomyces boulardii and the potential virulence of commercial preparations of the latter. The weighting of subjects covered reflects the areas of interest of the editors. However, the book could have benefited from stronger editing given the repetition between chapters such as those on antibiotic-associated diarrhoea, Clostridium difficile-associated disease and adult diarrhoea.

Setting these criticisms aside, the book is a valuable source of reference for those interested in discovering the facts as opposed to the myths about biotherapeutic agents. The layout is pleasing and user-friendly, with appropriate use of tables and occasional figures and photographs. There is a comprehensive account of the effects of biotherapeutic agents on the normal gut flora, and interesting chapters on vaginitis therapy and on future directions. Individuals and departments with an interest in this area should consider having a copy of the book, and libraries should be encouraged to purchase one as a reference.

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