Diagnostic Immunology

The stated aim of this book is to provide information for both clinicians and laboratory scientists, thus bridging the gap between manuals of clinical immunology and medical laboratory immunology. The initial section of the book comprises a review of basic immunology followed by a review of hypersensitivity, auto-immunity and immunodeficiency. The final section of the book refers to principles of diagnostic techniques used in the immunopathology laboratory.

The section on basic immunology is lucidly written, as up to date as a text book of this nature could be, and clearly illustrated with numerous helpful line drawings. This section provides a good foundation text for undergraduates (medical and non-medical) and students of medical laboratory science. The section on laboratory techniques is also clearly set out and provides a useful, if basic, review of the methods employed in diagnostic immunology.

However, the weakness of the book resides in the breadth of the audience it seeks to target. The clinical aspects are not sufficiently detailed or related to case histories to be valuable beyond the introductory stage in a medical curriculum. The Textbook of clinical immunology by Chapel and Haeney or Basic and clinical immunology edited by Stites and Terr are, to my mind, superior in this respect. The basic science again is not dealt with in sufficient depth, for example, physiological anatomy of lymphoid tissue is hardly dealt with at all. Immunoglobulin structure and function is dealt with only very briefly, as are T- and B-cell activation and tolerance. Hence, this book is unlikely to be used beyond the initial stage by specialist students in the subject.

Finally, the section on laboratory immunology is not sufficiently detailed in the technical or interpretational aspects to be of value to staff in specialist immunology laboratories.

In summary, this text is a useful introductory book for undergraduates and medical laboratory technologists particularly those not specialist in immunology who wish to obtain an introduction to the subject. It is unlikely to be read and re-read by those with a special interest in the subject.

D. S. Kumararatne

Molecular and Cell Biology of Sexually Transmitted Diseases.

This book is one of the series Molecular and cell biology of human disease. The aim of this series is to present the contribution that molecular biology has made to the understanding of different diseases. This volume concentrates on aspects of sexually transmitted diseases where molecular and immunological techniques have substantially increased the understanding of the pathogenesis, diagnosis or treatment of the disease. The editors have largely chosen subjects that have not been reviewed recently elsewhere, hence HIV infection and acquired immunodeficiency disease, and papilloma virus infection and cervical carcinoma are not included.

In approaching the book in this manner they have brought together a collection of excellent reviews including chapters on the bacteria that cause sexually transmitted infections—Nesseria gonorrhoea, Treponema pallidum, chlamydiae and mycoplasmas—and on the viruses—hepatitis B, Molluscum contagiosum and Herpes simplex virus. Also included are chapters on the molecular biology of candida pathogenesis and on the molecular analysis of Trichomonas vaginalis surface protein repertoires. The book concludes with a discussion of anti-idiotypic therapeutic strategies in HIV infection. All the chapters review their subject in depth, varying in length from 14 to 32 pages, and are well referenced.

It is refreshing to encounter a book on sexually transmitted diseases which is not primarily focused on HIV. In recent years, molecular techniques have been used to dissect HIV with amazing rapidity. The value of this book is that it demonstrates clearly that molecular techniques have also produced significant advances in the depth of our knowledge of a wide range of sexually transmitted diseases. As the role of other sexually transmitted diseases in HIV infection is becoming increasingly recognised, this book will be a valuable source of information to potential research workers as well as a useful reference for those currently involved in research into sexually transmitted diseases. Hopefully it will also act as an incentive to clinicians and microbiologists to use molecular techniques for the detection and diagnosis of sexually transmitted diseases.

C. Ison

Progress in Medical Virology

Progress in medical virology has now reached its 40th anniversary with this volume, and the series has become established reading for all those in the broad field of human virology. This volume continues the high standards set by its predecessors, and, as the promotional paragraph on the cover maintains, contains reviews on "diverse topics in medical virology". Consequently I doubt whether any virologist would read it cover to cover, but all will find some chapters of interest and value. The 10 reviews from an international group of authors range from the British contribution of Desselberger and Flewett which looks at the provision of routine virus diagnostic services, to a review on the assembly of bacteriophage P22 as a model for the assembly of a ds-DNA virus.

The chapter I found of most value personally was the wide-ranging review of hepatitis B from molecular biology to treatment. The accounts of hepatitis B in sub-Saharan Africa, rables and hypotheses on the origins of strains of influenza A all made fascinating reading. Also of particular interest to those in clinical virology are reviews of detection of HIV sequences, CMV diagnosis and defective parvoviruses.

As one may anticipate, the impact that molecular biology is having on the understanding and practice of medical virology runs as a theme through most chapters. In this context, the historical epidemiology of rables virus together with apparent proof of incubation periods up to 7 years demonstrates the impact that this technology is having upon our understanding of epidemiology and the way we approach control of infectious disease.

Progress in medical virology is obviously facing competition from a number of review journals, but I would suggest that volumes such as this still have a place, and are an essential acquisition for our departmental library, even if price precludes a place on our own personal bookshelf.

P. Morgan-Capner