Book reviews

Congenital Disorders of Erythropoiesis. Ciba Foundation Symposium 37 (new series). (Pp. viii + 408; illustrated. Dfl 68.50; \$27.50.) Amsterdam: Excerpta Medica. 1976

This book consists of the papers and subsequent discussion of the Ciba Foundation Symposium held in London in March 1975. The contributors have an international reputation in the investigation of disordered globin chain synthesis and erythroid cell maturation. The book is unique in focusing attention on the refractory anaemias of childhood such as thalassaemia, Fanconi's anaemia, Diamond-Blackfan anaemia, and dyserythropoietic anaemia.

Most of the papers consist of the cellular and molecular biology, electron microscopy, and cytogenetics of these disorders and are written to a very high standard. There are also useful sections on clinical management including androgen and chelation therapy, marrow transplantation, and antenatal diagnosis. This stimulating book is an important source of basic information for paediatric haematologists and for research workers interested in disordered erythropoiesis and its treatment.

J. STUART

The Pathogenic Anaerobic Bacteria. 2nd edition. By Louis D. S. Smith. (Pp. xiii + 430; \$26.75.) Springfield: Charles C. Thomas. 1975.

There can be few clinical microbiologists who are not acquainted with the earlier scholarly anaerobic writings of Professor Louis Smith, *Introduction to the Pathogenic Anaerobes*—1955, and the first edition of the work presently under review. That Louis has done it again is clear from every one of the 360 pages of text of this remarkably fine book, which serves both as an authoritative guide for the initiate and as a masterly commentary for the specialist.

After setting the scene of the anaerobic world and giving a brief account of the isolation and generic identification of anaerobic bacteria, Professor Smith devotes 16 chapters to the anaerobic non-spore-forming bacilli, the anaerobic cocci, the

pathogenic and related clostridia, and the anaerobic spirochaetes. An excellent final chapter is concerned with anaerobes in the microflora of the human body. The bibliography contains around 1000 carefully chosen references.

The whole profession, and clinical microbiologists in particular, will be grateful to the author for this comprehensive and readable account of so important a subject. Although the cost seems high the book is unreservedly recommended as essential reading at any price.

A. T. WILLIS

Unclassifiable Leukemias. Edited by M. Bessis and G. Brecher. (Pp. viii + 270; illustrated; \$19.70.) Berlin, Heidelberg, New York: Springer-Verlag. 1975.

This monograph contains the proceedings of a symposium held in October 1974 and forms the first issue of a new international journal *Blood Cells*. The new journal is to be edited by M. Bessis with R. I. Weed as associate editor, and will join the existing list of more than 20 journals devoted to haematology. My own welcome for this venture, warm in anticipation, from respect and regard for both editors, has been a trifle tempered by consideration of the first number. There is a place for publishing the proceedings of symposia as specific monographs or perhaps as supplements to journals, but they should not comprise the journal itself. The reputation of a journal depends heavily on the critical skill of the editor and his panel of expert referees who ensure that submitted work is scientifically sound and well written, and makes a significant contribution to original knowledge. Symposium contributions are not submitted to such a screen and would commonly not have passed it. They often consist, at least in part, of work which has either been published already or is too tentative to be ready for publication. *Unclassifiable Leukemias* shows all these defects. The title is faulty: the book is almost all about classifiable leukaemias. Nevertheless, for a reader who has not kept abreast with the controversies of the past 10 years here is a bird's eye view of the classification arena.

F. G. J. HAYHOE

Iron Metabolism and its Disorders. Proceedings of the Third Workshop Conference Hoechst, Schloss Reisenburg April 1975. Edited by H. Kief. (Pp. ix + 344; illustrated; \$31.95, Dfl 80.00.) Amsterdam: Elsevier Excerpta Medica. New York: American Elsevier. 1975.

The Schloss Reisenburg Institute was founded by Professor L. Heilmeyer in 1966. In the short span of time since then it has been host to a large number of symposia and workshops which have been successful in fulfilling its founder's purpose to create 'a centre for scientific communication for scientists from all parts of the world'. A workshop on Iron Metabolism and its Disorders in April 1975 brought together some 35 of the world's leading experts on the subject who spent two days in discussing in depth four themes: iron balance; iron deficiency; parenchymal iron overload; and principles of therapy. Each paper or group of papers was followed by discussion which has been reproduced either verbatim or as a summarized comment.

Topics of current importance included transferrin-erythroblast interaction, the role of ferritin, and the use of serum ferritin assay as a clinical tool. But after 25 years iron absorption still remains a topic for study, and an extensive paper by H. C. Heinrich gives useful details on the clinical uses of investigation of iron absorption and turnover.

The book was published within eight months of the conference; it is well set out, with an adequate index and few typographical errors. This says much for the skill of the editor and the co-operation of his co-editors, Bothwell, Finch, Heinrich, Jacobs, and Verrier Jones. To judge from the discussions, the conference was stimulating to the participants. The reader will find in the text useful and up-to-date information and wise advice which makes it particularly recommended.

S. M. LEWIS