Book reviews

The Cellular Basis of the Immune Response. By Edward S. Golub. (Pp. x + 278; illustrated; £6.50.) Massachusetts: Sinauer Associates Inc. Distributed by W. H. Freeman & Co. Ltd., Reading, England. 1977.

When in 1965 at an Antibody Workshop meeting Seymour Benzer was driven to declare 'at last immunology has become a science' (on hearing the results of Norbert Hilschmann's analysis of the amino-acid sequence of two Bence Jones proteins with their constant and variable regions), little did he realise that in the ensuing dozen years, despite tremendous strides, the 'science' was to pose more questions than it was to answer.

The historic (1970s!) experiments which have been employed in answering the questions to date are fully exploited in this text, making for compelling reading.

This book is divided into four sections; two, dealing with cell cooperation and the regulation of the immune response, both so much in the forefront of this advancing science, benefit enormously from the author's declared interest and obvious enthusiasm.

Each chapter takes the form of a lecture, introduced by an 'overview'; the topic is then developed, employing the key experiments critical for each new concept with a profusion of simple but precise diagrams. The chapter closes with a summary and an excellent bibliography.

A rather brief account of the lymphokines, including MIF tests, was a disappointment.

Intended as a review of the experimental basis of immunology, Professor Golub's book succeeds like no other and is right up to date. It is essential reading for students of immunology and medicine and scientists working in related fields. As background reading for all physicians managing the expanding field of immunological disease it can be thoroughly recommended.

I hope the success that this book will surely have leads to a second volume on clinical immunology, perhaps multi-author but hopefully under the firm editorship of Edward Golub, whose style is so appealing.

H. GRANT PRENTICE

Breast Cancer. Progress in Clinical and Biological Research. Volume 12. Edited by Albert C. W. Montague, G. L. Stonesifer, and E. F. Lewison. Associate Editors: W. T. Bessler, R. S. Handley, P. Siegenthaler, and E. Witkin. (Pp. 549; illustrated; \$38.00.) New York: Alan R. Liss. 1977.

I read this volume with mixed enthusiasm, influenced by the rather uninspired foreword which opens with the unhelpful and patently incorrect statement that 'notable improvements in the cure rates of carcinoma of the breast have not been attained over the past 75 years' and misspells the great Halsted's name wrongly not once, but twice.

The book represents the proceedings of an international breast cancer conference held in Lucerne in the summer of 1976. These are presented as a series of rather disjointed contributions, often in abstract form. In some instances the list of references at the end of each chapter is longer than the text itself. This being so, the book must be taken for what it is, namely, a reference volume rather than a textbook on breast cancer.

There are 11 sections in the book, incorporating 50 separate contributions. Some of the sections are disappointingly brief, such as that on adjuvant chemotherapy, while others occupy a large part of the book. The section on radiographic and thermographic diagnosis occupies more than 100 of the 550 pages in the volume. Some of the earlier chapters on the biology of breast cancer provide the most interesting reading, and, in particular, there is a stimulating account of biological markers by Jean-Pierre Mach and his colleagues. Jensen's chapter on hormone dependency in breast cancer is also a most lucid account of the topic. Some of the weaker contributions occur in the section dealing with treatment, but this is understandable in view of the brevity of many of these chapters.

This is a useful book but not an outstanding one. On a point of production, it is a pity that the type of print varies from chapter to chapter. This makes for uncomfortable reading and considerably reduces the visual appeal of the book.

IAN BURN

Notice

Supraregional Assay Service

The Supraregional Assay Service (SAS) Laboratories were set up on 1 January 1974 to offer rare and difficult assays to the hospital staffs of England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (Scotland has its own administration). There are 26 such laboratories, which cover the fields of peptide hormones, steroids, certain drugs, specific proteins, lead and heavy metals, and tissue enzymes. The location of the various laboratories, together with details and notes of the assays and their significance, are given in the SAS booklet which has been distributed to laboratories throughout the Regions.

The Directors of all the SAS laboratories met recently and formed a corporate body designed to offer a source of specialist advice. Representatives of various other clinical and scientific professional organisations will be invited to serve on the Committee to provide a body of opinion which can enter into dialogue with the DHSS, Regional, and Area Authorities.

The Committee will be concerned with furthering the objectives of the SAS as a whole, particularly the maintenance of high standards of assay performance, quality control, the preparation and supply of scarce reagents, and defining the scope of the service.

The Chairman of the new Committee is Professor W. R. Butt (Birmingham), the Vice-Chairman is Professor J. R. Hobbs (London), and the Secretary is Mr W. B. Yeoman (Regional Toxicology Laboratory, Dudley Road Hospital, Birmingham B18 7QH; telephone 021-554 3801).