

Book Reviews

Sandritter's Colour Atlas & Textbook of Macropathology. 4th English ed. C Thomas. Translated and Ed WH Kirsten. (Pp 366; £87.50.) Blackwells. 1985.

Pathologists cannot have failed to notice the recent rash of colour atlases appearing on bookshop shelves. Most are expensive, but well produced, large format volumes. At £87.50 Sandritter's atlas of macropathology is also expensive but, being the size of an average monograph, it is likely to go unnoticed among its peers. Within its unimpressive covers, however, is an outstanding collection of colour illustrations covering almost every conceivable aspect of macroscopic pathology. The small size of many of the illustrations in no way detracts from their value, and there is a very useful and economically written accompanying text, which gives a brief overview of the conditions illustrated. At a time of declining interest in necropsies and the devaluation of macroscopic pathology in general, this atlas is to be welcomed. Established pathologists will read it with nostalgia, and trainees should be encouraged to use it as their standard for macroscopic dissection and display.

PG ISAACSON

Regulation of the Immune System. UCLA Symposia on Molecular and Cellular Biology New Series. Vol 18. Ed H Cantor, L Chess, and E Sercarz. (Pp 976; £122.) Alan R Liss Inc. 1985.

This awe inspiring collation of immunological debates is not a book for novices or those with only a passing professional interest in immunological advances. It is an account of a meeting in March, 1984 that (with such an all embracing title) dealt with most of the major issues of this subject. There are debates on the nature of the T cell receptor, cellular interactions, the idiotype network, and the proliferation of B cells that result in the synthesis of antibodies. The endless controversies surrounding these issues, for so long unresolved by classical biological techniques, are yielding to the irresistible combination of gene mapping and the definition of their products by monoclonal antibodies. Hardly surprisingly, immunological debate has been raised to fever pitch by combining the immunologist's imagination with analytical techniques of the potency of this meeting. Those who can stand the heat will enjoy the book; others should avoid it; they will be maddened by the combination of cryptic terminology and the presentation of data in equally cryptic fash-

ion, or in the minutest of detail. Librarians should also avoid it; a conference proceedings at this price might also produce a febrile reaction.

M DENMAN

Recombinant DNA Research and Viruses. Cloning and Expression of Viral Genes. Developments in Molecular Virology 5. Ed Y Becker. (Pp 373; £45.50.) Martinus Nijhoff. 1985.

Research on recombinant DNA is central to modern experimental virology and has opened new vistas for the study and recognition of viruses of clinical importance. Our understanding of hepatitis B virus, which still cannot be serially propagated in vitro has shot ahead through recombinant DNA methods, and the causative agent of AIDS was cloned and completely sequenced by four independent groups within seven months of its definitive isolation.

This book is one of a series entitled Developments in Molecular Virology. It contains 18 chapters, mainly on research on the molecular cloning of individual types of plant and animal virus and three chapters on bacterial plasmid and phage vector systems. Each chapter has been written by a different author or authors and draws heavily on their own research experience. Some have put their work in a general setting while others have not bothered.

In an excellent first chapter, Howard Temin, who discovered reverse transcriptase, discusses retrovirus cloning, including the use of retrovirus genomes as vehicles for introducing foreign genes into mammalian cells and germ lines. Two picornaviruses (human polio and bovine foot and mouth disease) are well reviewed. L Gissmann and E Schwarz present a useful chapter on papilloma viruses both as vectors and as pathogens, but, clearly, this chapter was written in mid 1983 and is so grossly dated that there is minimal discussion even of the authors' own important work on human papilloma viruses in cervical carcinoma.

This book represents a missed opportunity. For example, there is no mention of hepatitis B viruses, no reference to the potential of vaccinia virus as an expression vector for human and veterinary immunisation against other pathogens, no discussion of recombinant DNA cloning methods as a means of studying highly pathogenic viruses in complete safety, and no analysis of the use of cloned probes for clinical diagnosis and assay. It is not edited but merely compiled. The chapters are photographically reproduced from typescript, and the volume

is overpriced. I would not recommend it as an introduction to molecular virology for clinical pathologists.

RA WEISS

Ultrastructure of Brain Tumours and Biopsies. A Diagnostic Atlas. Methods in Laboratory Medicine, Vol 5. CL Dolman. (Pp 266; £40.) Praeger. 1984.

Since the first publication in 1971 of an electron microscope atlas of brain tumours it has been expected that others would follow. This has not happened, although chapters devoted to the subject have appeared in larger volumes, and many papers with appropriate illustrations have been published. The lack of a comprehensive atlas has presumably been due to the difficulty in producing a sufficient number of high quality illustrations at a reasonable price. Dr Dolman has drawn on her considerable experience by carefully selecting illustrative electron micrographs from her files and collating them into a series of chapters that deal with the principal types of intracranial tumour. Innate defects of metabolism, dementias, and intracranial infections have also been included. A short description of the features, together with a list of appropriate references, are given.

There is undoubtedly a need for a relatively comprehensive electron microscope atlas of intracranial tumours, although most departments of neuropathology will have their own collections of "typical" illustrations. The success, or otherwise, of this atlas is likely, therefore, to be determined by the quality of the illustrations, the critical nature of the descriptions, and its usefulness as a bench book for evaluating a difficult surgical specimen. Rather disappointingly, not all of these criteria have been met insofar as the micrographs have not been printed on sufficiently high quality paper, some lack detail because of inappropriate magnification, and yet others would have benefited from annotation. Furthermore, the accompanying text sometimes lacks critical detail, which leaves the reader uncertain as to what are the most important diagnostic features of a particular type of tumour.

Dr Dolman is to be complimented on this book, but in my view the very difficult task of compiling an atlas such as this has only been partially successful. Nevertheless, it is a useful source of information for general trainee pathologists and neuropathologists and for others in the neurosciences with an interest in the ultrastructure of intracranial tumours and other disease processes.

DI GRAHAM