

Book Reviews

Mammalian Neuroendocrinology

G. W. BENNETT and S. A. WHITEHEAD
Croom Helm, Beckenham, 1983, pp. 279, £8.95

Reasonably priced, well illustrated, informative and a pleasure to read: what more can one say in praise of a book? Well, for those of you not convinced by such an unsupported outburst of admiration, let me go into more detail.

The book is written by a physiologist and a physiologist/pharmacologist, who assume only that the reader has a biological background. Beyond that, it is written in such a way that one is elevated from the relative simplicity of the differences between endocrine secretion, neurosecretion and nerve transmission to the intricacies of feedback inhibition of pituitary-hormone release and the influence of day and season on endocrine rhythms, and without realizing the transition. Much of the success for this progress can be attributed to the clarity and informative nature of the line drawings and Tables, and to the simple easily read prose style.

The authors also rightly assume that readers of the book are likely to come from a wide background, and a whole chapter is set aside to consider the variety of techniques used to investigate the endocrine system. Time and space is taken

to describe to non-pharmacologists techniques such as tissue superfusion and micro-iontophoresis, and many pharmacologists would benefit from the sections on high-performance liquid chromatography and immunochemistry.

One might imagine that a book dealing with only the hypothalamic pituitary control of what is after all a very complex interrelated system would not be entirely satisfactory. However, again the authors have succeeded in striking the right balance. They have achieved this by including sufficient of the peripheral endocrine organ function to make the control systems understandable.

References are not given in the text, I assume because the book is a general overview, but a more than adequate reading list appears at the end of each chapter to compensate for this. The cross-referencing of the book I did not like: the reader is referred to a particular chapter number and section, and, since these are not marked on the page, it is necessary to look each one up in the Table of Contents. A page number would have been so much better.

A pity to end on a criticism, but a small one, in an otherwise excellent book.

B. ROBINSON

Immunoassays for Clinical Chemistry, 2nd edition

W. M. HUNTER and J. E. T. CORRIE (Editors)
Churchill Livingstone, Edinburgh, London, Melbourne and New York, 1983, pp. 701, £30.00

This book is rather oddly described as the 'second edition' of an earlier (1971) and highly successful text. Though it is true that the two works have some aspects in common, there are also substantial differences, and the present volume can therefore be considered as a new and separate product. Furthermore, the title itself may be misleading in its use of the general term 'immunoassays', when in fact the majority of the contents address radioimmunoassays, with only occasional (but very valuable) asides to their non-isotopic alternatives.

The book describes the proceedings of a meeting held in Edinburgh in 1982 and attended almost exclusively by workers from the U.K. The various headings follow a fairly standard pattern, ranging from the choice and preparation of the basic reagents through operational aspects such as automation and quality control. Strong emphasis is placed on the use of mono-

clonal antibodies and of labelled antibody systems: almost certainly the way ahead for this whole area of technology, though some of the current disadvantages are rather glossed over. Most of the presentations are of a high standard, though on occasion the material is somewhat repetitive and pedestrian, and revives long-dead and unproductive arguments on priorities of discovery and minutiae of technology. The editors could perhaps have taken a slightly less diplomatic attitude on what or what not to include. By way of compensation, the discussions are superbly edited and presented, and frequently contain some of the most useful information.

This book will almost certainly enjoy the same success as its highly regarded predecessor. It is not an introduction to the subject: the novice would have to research long and hard in order to ascertain the simple principles of the technique. However, it can be highly recommended to all those with a specialist interest in the field of radioimmunoassay and related topics.

T. CHARD

Heparin (New Biochemical and Medical Aspects)

IRENE WITT (Editor)
Walter de Gruyter, Berlin and New York, 1983, pp. 272, DM 155

Yet another book entitled 'Heparin'. This clinically useful substance still provides scope for speculation, although much is now known about its structure and synthesis. The book contains the proceedings of the symposium of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Klinische Chemie, held at Titisee, Germany, in 1981. The section of most interest to biochemists is headed 'Heparin: Structure, Mechanism of Action, Biosynthesis and Catabolism'; it consists of four chapters. Rosenberg discusses his evidence for his view on the function and structure of heparin, and Riesenfeld gives a concise account of its biosynthesis. In the third chapter Dawes takes on the difficult

task of defining the physiological function and fate of heparin, and finally Aronson *et al.* report their work on the problem of the degradation of heparin and heparin-protamine complexes. Apart from this first section, there are eight chapters dealing with the clinical assay of heparin and eleven reporting clinical usage and the problems of monitoring heparin therapy. Thus the book will be of most use to those directly engaged in the medical application of heparin. Biochemists interested in the structure and synthesis of heparin who have kept up to date with the literature will already be acquainted with the contents of the first two chapters. The delay between the symposium and publication has rendered 'new aspects' somewhat a misnomer.

M. LUSCOMBE

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