

Book reviews

Immunoenzyme Multiple Staining Methods. Van de Loos CM, ed. (£29.95.) Bios Scientific Publishers, 1999, ISBN 1 8599 6187 8.

This book is number 45 in the well respected *Royal Microscopical Society Microscopy Handbook* series. Its stated intention is to be an invaluable practical companion for cell biologists, pathologists, and histologists new to multiple staining and to be a useful reference for more experienced workers. As someone who has no hands on experience of multiple immunoenzyme staining, I found it to be a concise, clearly written, and informative overview of the subject. After an introduction to the historical aspects, the reader is led through the principles of double and triple staining methods punctuated by many schematic diagrams and occasional photomicrographs. There is a helpful flow chart to aid the selection of the most suitable method and the chapter on tips and troubleshooting was of interest. Nearly half of the book comprises a series of appendices listing references, commercial and non-commercial visualisation systems, antibody conjugation protocols, and sources of reagents. Overall, I found this book to be a good basic introduction to the subject and would try to ensure that a copy was at hand should I ever attempt any of these techniques.

J CLOVER

Nitric Oxide and the Regulation of the Peripheral Circulation. Kadowitz PJ, McNamara DB, eds. (£86.00.) Birkhauser, 2000. ISBN 3 7643 4046 0.

In the first chapter of this book, Louis Ignarro gives an overview of the discovery of endothelial control of vascular smooth muscle relaxation (endothelium dependent relaxation; EDRF), and the simultaneous elucidation of the mechanism of action of nitrovasodilators (release of nitric oxide (NO) from glyceryl trinitrate). Ignarro and Salvador Moncada showed by different techniques that EDRF and NO were the same substance. In 2001, NO is recognised as a ubiquitous molecule with multiple functions, but it continues to tease us with therapeutic possibilities rather than actualities. We are still at the edge of understanding with this molecule, and the contents of this book bear this out. Each chapter describes the actions of NO at a particular channel, or on a particular ion, or in a particular vascular bed. All chapters are written by experts in the field and give highly readable overviews of the known effects of NO in that particular organ. I found the chapters on vascular beds, outside my normal

range of interest, particularly informative. For me highlights were the chapters on the liver and kidney. The effects of NO on the cerebral circulation, a particularly difficult area to describe to the non-specialist, are also well explained. Nevertheless, there are some reservations, both practical and philosophical, about this volume.

The first practical issue is the age of the references. Mostly, these date to 1997 at the latest—a long time ago in pharmacological terms. Many references are a staggering 20 years old, which begs the question: is this a review book or a book of current thinking? This leads to the second problem, which is that the structure of the chapters is inconsistent. Some give a general overview of their subject, whereas others seem to contain experimental data, which do not appear to have been peer reviewed at the time of publication, because the graphs are often unattributed and, with one exception, not referenced to a meeting where they might have been presented. If I am mistaken in this, I apologise. Perhaps the editors could enlighten me.

The philosophical issue is one that has been troubling me for some time; namely, that our understanding of NO is still mainly descriptive. We know what happens if NO metabolism is manipulated pharmacologically, and all the chapters in this book describe such data. Some authors do attempt to put NO into a physiological context, but do not answer the basic questions. Why did NO come to be such an important molecule in evolutionary terms? Why is it ubiquitous? And how is it really interacting in these vascular beds? In short, what is NO really for? Having been a young postdoctoral fellow at the time of the original excitement in the 1980s, I cannot help feeling that NO research has blundered into a maze with no clear way to the truth at the centre. My colleagues tell me this is just a midlife crisis. I hope so. In the meantime, this excellent little book will fill a space in the university library, until the truth comes along.

K STUART-SMITH

Taking Health Telematics into the 21st Century. Rigby M, Roberts R, Thick M, eds. (£35.00.) Radcliffe Medical Press, 2000. ISBN 1 85775 344 5.

This book is a collection of vignettes divided into 17 chapters addressing issues of telemedicine. The book draws from a wide authorship, principally from the UK and Scandinavia. The evolution of telemedicine and the issues it raises are discussed. There is a strong emphasis given to important medicolegal points, and the impact on health care is evaluated by workers who have developed and now practise telemedicine, mainly from a Scandinavian perspective.

Unfortunately, the book has suffered from a lack of editorial attention, with the result that several of the points are duplicated and there is a sense that the chapters are disarticulated. In addition, the book gives

only scant mention to equipment purchase and the practical mechanics of setting up a telemedicine system. There is also little attention given to telepathology.

A lack of photographic illustrations aggravates the lack of readability. A smiling health worker on a television screen and a patient having a video assisted ear examination are the only highlights.

In summary, although the book draws together important concepts surrounding telemedicine and telematics, there is very little of interest here to pathologists. If asked whether I would take the book on my desert island to assist with establishing a telepathology service, my answer would be “no”.

S E TROTTER

Methods in Molecular Medicine: Renal Cancer. Mydlo JH, ed. (£99.50.) Humana Press, 2001. ISBN 0 89603 828 9.

At first sight, it might seem that a textbook entitled *Renal Cancer; Methods and Protocols* might be of limited value only to those of us not passionate about the study of this cancer type. It is perhaps disappointing then that the title belies a much broader coverage of molecular biology and other approaches to the study of cancer in general; one which should be of considerable value to the scientist or clinician working in any laboratory based study of cancer. In particular, there are excellent chapters on several established and newer technologies, including comparative genomic hybridisation, the detection of apoptosis, fluorescent *in situ* hybridisation, the polymerase chain reaction, and laser capture microdissection, among others. As with other titles in this series, each chapter comprises both an introductory text to the techniques and detailed protocols, which are supported by high quality illustrations. Overall, I found this book surprisingly easy to read; not always the case for a methodology based text.

P G MURRAY

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