

priately illustrated, and well referenced. The only significant criticism I have of the book is that the reproduction of illustrations is not consistently good. The paper is not glossy and several figures lose clarity as a result. However, this is not a major detraction.

In summary, this volume would be a valuable addition to any laboratory concerned with plant molecular genetics. Postgraduate students, postdoctoral researchers and group leaders will find that it may help them to decide which strategy to employ in gene isolation and will provide an informative introduction to the chosen techniques.

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**An Introduction to Recombinant DNA in Medicine (2nd edn).** Alan E.H. Emery and Sue Malcolm. John Wiley and Sons, Chichester. 1995. Pp. 206. Price £14.99, paperback. ISBN 0 471 93984 6.

Being asked by a senior medical consultant to justify why it is important that one of their MD students has a working knowledge of genes, promoters, PCR, linkage, and homologous recombination is a recurring nightmare for me. The obvious implication is that although this molecular biology stuff is interesting, most still see it as having no relevance to how the majority of patients are assessed and treated. In their excellent book, *An Introduction to Recombinant DNA in Medicine*, Alan Emery and Sue Malcolm show not only that recombinant DNA technology will have an enormous impact on medicine, but that it already does. What their book serves to do, and does well, is explain the basic technology of molecular biology while remaining focused on the application of this to medicine. This book wins high praise from me on four counts: (i) the basic science, both the concepts and the technical detail are described very clearly, (ii) although the book covers a wide variety of subjects, the weighting given to each is remarkably even, (iii) historical background is often used to explain developments allowing the reader to see why there has been such a huge expansion in this field in such a short time, and (iv), the consistent emphasis on how and why this technology is relevant clinically.

The first half of the book focuses on the science and techniques of recombinant DNA manipulation, whilst the second half describes the molecular pathology of both genetic and acquired diseases, prevention and treatment of disease using recombinant DNA and finishes with some discussion of the wider issues associated with the applica-

tion of molecular genetics to medicine. The text is very readable and assumes no prior knowledge of the field. Medical students and practising clinicians are likely to find the book most useful, but anyone with a general interest in the application of molecular biology to medicine would find it helpful. Some of the figures are not as sophisticated as we have become used to, but this might reflect the relatively low price compared to similar publications. There are perhaps a few areas I would have expanded. For instance, whilst the technology of transgenesis is described, a couple of examples of some of the disease models which have been created by this technology might have helped the reader to understand its importance more fully, and a little more on the human genome project would also have been useful.

The book is as up-to-date as publishing deadlines allow and should not date too quickly although some areas, for example, the chapter on treatment, may see more progress than others. What omissions I found were small, for example, I was surprised to see no mention of the cloning of antibodies as single chain molecules in the section on monoclonal antibodies and in the gene therapy section there was no mention of DNA vaccination which uses naked DNA alone. However, I am getting rather into the minutia of this field and away from the main thrust of the book which is an overview. I am about to lend my copy to the paediatric registrar who started in the laboratory today, because, and I have two witnesses, he said to me only this morning 'Is there a book about what I'm supposed to be doing for the next year or so?'. The answer now is yes.

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**Visual Genetics CD Rom (demonstration disk).** Alan Day and Robert Dean. Jones and Bartlett, Massachusetts. 1996. Price £24.95. ISBN 07637 0140 8.

How will we cope with teaching genetics to ever-increasing numbers of students with ever-decreasing resources? Can the use of computer-based teaching methods solve our problems? With these mundane questions in mind, I inserted the *Visual Genetics CD Rom* demonstration disk with real interest. The demonstration disk had two representative sections from the Virtual Genetics Study Guide (on complementation and on structural chromosome abnormalities), selected from the normal range of topics in the full version which would be included in most basic genetics courses. It also had material on nutritional mutant isolation and characterization and on complemen-