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Book Review

Jaffe ES, Harris NL, Stein H, Vardiman JW, editors: Pathology and Genetics of Tumours of Haematopoietic and Lymphoid Tissues, World Health Organization Classification of Tumours, 351 pp, Lyon, France, International Agency for Research on Cancer Press, 2001 (\$75.00).

This is the third in the series of "blue books" conceived by Drs. Kleihues and Sobin. Because Dr. Kleihues is a neuropathologist, it was natural that the series began with a volume on brain tumors. The second volume dealt with gastrointestinal tumors—surprise, surprise—because Dr. Sobin has some fleeting interest in G.I. pathology. Both monographs were exemplary, and the obvious question some of us had was whether the next volume, not exactly in the series editors' bailiwicks, would be in the same class.

The answer to the rhetorical question posed above is an enthusiastic YES. The volume on L&Ls (lymphomas and leukemias) turned out to be an incredibly well compiled encyclopedic treasure-trove of facts and factoids pertaining to hematopoietic and lymphoid neoplasms. I simply do not see how it could have been done better.

Although a product of a very large committee, the book presents a remarkably unified point of view, which is not only coherent but also intellectually appealing and comprehensible. The complexity of hematopathology suddenly becomes less intimidating, and the jigsaw puzzle composed of superficially unrelated entities starts making sense. The clinical relevance of immunophenotyping of neoplastic cells, chromosomal, and genetic analysis becomes self evident. Facts previously considered trivial suddenly become diagnostically relevant. For general pathologists, who, like this reviewer, consider themselves relatively well informed, the book is an eye-opener. Nothing seems to be missing, and if I had to choose one hematopathology book as my vademecum for the solitary practice on the proverbial deserted island, this would be it.

It is difficult to choose the most salient feature in a book that is so consistently well produced. Nevertheless, if pressed I would opt for the excellent presentation of the new WHO classification of lymphomas. This is the first time in my 30 years in pathology that I found a book more useful for understanding of a complex topic than a recent journal article! Also, one cannot but be awed by the quality of color illustrations, which are invariably of highest quality. The standard dilemmas of every editor, such as what to include and what to forego, or how to use the space most economically and still not overcrowd each page, have been solved enviably well. The same applies to the graphs and summary tables. Many of us will be using in daily practice the tables of the differential diagnostic points and diagnostic criteria. And finally, if you are in need of urgent help from an expert, you may find his or her address and e-mail URL listed at the end of the book.

To add a negative, requested *de rigueur* from credible reviewers, let me mention that today's computers make the 1451 references listed on close to 30 page superfluous. The readers would have been served better with a shorter, better chosen list. I do not know too many pathologists who will look up a 1975 report on arsenic intoxication related megaloblastic anemia, just to give one example. Maybe the series editors will use their prerogatives in the next monographs and put those 30 pages to better use.

This wonderful book can be purchased directly from the publisher (www.iarc.fr/WHO-bluebooks). If you are a member of the USCAP or IAP, you can buy it for \$50 (to spell it out—only 50 US bucks, in case you thought I made a mistake). Buy it—satisfaction guaranteed by this reviewer, who knows no better medical book bargain.

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