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BOOK REVIEWS

The pick of the crop

Annual Review of Genomics and Human Genetics, volume 4, 2003

Edited by Lander E, Page D, Lifton R. Annual Reviews, Palo Alto, CA, USA

Andrew John Walley

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The Annual Reviews series aim to provide timely, concise and authoritative reviews covering relevant topics within a single field. With the rapid growth of genetics and genomics in the last decade, Annual Reviews began a series of volumes covering this field and this review covers volume 4. I would not attempt to review in-depth each and every chapter, but will try to convey my overall impressions of the utility of this book from the perspective of someone who has been working in the field of human genetics, on both monogenic and complex diseases, for over 10 years now.

The first thing that struck me on looking at the chapter index was the breadth of articles, covering a wide range of different topics. Subjects include the theory and practice of gene annotation, animal models of disease, model organism genomes, forensics, human genetic diversity and even clinical therapy for genetic disease. However, the majority of the articles concern the genetics of human disease, and are written by significant figures in those fields of study. As such, this volume continues the tradition of Annual Reviews in presenting high-quality articles summarising the current state of the art in specific areas of interest. For example, within my own area of interest in genetic analysis of complex traits, the article on diabetes mellitus by Florez, Hirschhorn and Altshuler is a clear summary of research in that field and how it has helped drive the analysis of complex traits in general. Of necessity, this review volume suffers from the perennial problem that there may not be a review of your particular field, but the range of subjects usually leads to some interesting articles for anyone working in genetics and genomics.

However, an important problem has become apparent with this volume. Annual Reviews also publishes a Genetics volume and there seems to be a grey area where the two series are now overlapping. Initially, ARGHG stayed within the boundaries of human genetics and genomics, but it has recently moved to cover non-human genomics and animal models. To the human geneticist, these chapters are probably only of passing interest and seem out of place, being more suited to the Annual Review of Genetics. Other subjects do not really seem to have a place in this series at all. A chapter debunking 'Creationism and Intelligent Design' is to be applauded in principle, but it seems inappropriate in a book aimed at reviewing current scientific progress. Equally, the review of 'Enzyme Therapy for Lysosomal Storage Disease' is well-written but seems only peripherally relevant, being predominantly about clinical treatment practice. Clearly, identification of the clinical relevance of the science is important in a basic science review, but this is not the place for a clinical review article.

In summary, this continues the high standards of the Annual Reviews and is to be recommended in principle to anyone with an interest in Genomics and Human Genetics as a good place to look for insightful articles covering a range of different fields of research. However, it is becoming increasingly clear that monthly review journals, such as Nature Reviews Genetics, are providing stiff competition, being more up to date and offering side benefits such as news and opinion articles, and it is going to be interesting to see how Annual Reviews respond to this challenge in the future■

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A most welcome new edition in a fast advancing field

Human molecular genetics 3

Tom Strachan, Andrew P Read. Garland Science, London, New York, 2004

Carla Jodice

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The third edition of *Human Molecular Genetics* by Strachan and Read provides a most welcome update of an already well established and greatly appreciated Human Genetics text. Such warm reception is due to the fact that Human Molecular Genetics has become an amazingly extraordinary field of study ever since Botstein presented the possibility of developing the first DNA based human gene map in 1980.

Furthermore, over the last 5 years, gathering information on the human genome has become increasingly faster,