

BOOK REVIEW

A breath of fresh air

Respiratory Genetics

EK Silverman, SD Shapiro, DA Lomas, ST Weiss. Hodder Arnold, 2005.

Patrick J Morrison

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This is an excellent new textbook on respiratory genetics – an area that has suddenly emerged over the last decade.

It is well written and divided into four clear sections:

Part 1 deals with key concepts in respiratory genetics – this section is targeted at nongeneticists and will not be of great interest to readers of this journal, but provides an excellent overview for the general respiratory clinician, and includes topics on Bioinformatics, including how

to carry out a good Pub Med search, and a succinct guide to SNPs and microarrays. Other chapters cover pharmacokinetics and functional genomics.

Parts 2–4 cover three clinical respiratory disease sections – Part 2 covers obstructive lung disease – asthma, chronic pulmonary disease and cystic fibrosis are covered comprehensively. Part 3 deals with interstitial lung disease, Part 4 covers miscellaneous – including the genetics of lung cancer and rare lung diseases. The glossary is excellent for those not fully

familiar with genetic terminology. Chapter references are indicated with an * or a diamond ◇ depending on relevance and an excellent way to find a good reference quickly.

I enjoyed the miscellaneous section most – covering rare diseases and syndromes. It is up to date and includes discussion of causes of hereditary and sporadic pneumothorax including certain mutations in Birt-Hogg-Dubé syndrome – something that was not really recognised until recently.

There are only six colour plates – disappointing in a book of this size but overall, this is a great book for respiratory and interested general physicians. General clinical geneticists will find it useful to have a copy in the library for reference, and may find their laboratory colleagues having a look at the more clinical sections. This book should become the standard reference text in this area ■

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A balanced perspective of psychiatric genetics

Psychiatric Genetics and Genomics

Edited by Peter McGuffin, Michael J Owen and Irving I Gottesman. Oxford University Press 2004.

Barbara A Jennings

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Peter McGuffin, Michael Owen, Irving Gottesman and their expert co-authors have provided a cohesive and comprehensive overview of psychiatric genetics. Their book reviews the plethora of data available from family,

twin and adoption studies for all of the major mental disorders. It also describes the underlying genetics and pathophysiology for diseases for which there is a detailed understanding, such as Huntington's disease and familial forms of

Alzheimer's disease; and the use of genetic counselling for such conditions. In addition, the authors discuss strategies for tracking down and studying functional polymorphisms that have modest but additive effects on brain function; approaches that are of interest to geneticists working on other complex human diseases.

Part one of this book equips the reader with an understanding of the important theoretical and technical aspects of modern molecular biology; the study of quantitative genetics; linkage and association studies. The important landmarks in the history of these disciplines are presented, and complex concepts are described thoroughly and in plain English.

The subsequent chapters that consider abnormal development and adult onset disorders such as affective disorder, schizophrenia, substance abuse and dementia follow a disciplined and well-structured format. In each case, the classification and