

scientific papers dealing with this subject, and intense competition between different research groups jockeying for position in the race to publication. In addition, clinicians differ in their opinion of the rights and wrongs of clinical trials of gene therapy. The recent death of a young, comparatively healthy, man after gene therapy in the USA only serves to polarise this debate. Finally, the popular press have latched onto the topic because of its headline-grabbing nature; on the one hand promising the cure for chronic disease, whilst on the other predicting that tinkering with the blueprint of life will be the downfall of civilisation. There is no doubt that as the field has advanced over the last decade, many clinicians and scientists have been left behind, without sufficient understanding of the molecular biology involved to comprehend the intricacies of each new report. Thus, there is a definite need for a book that explains the basics of molecular genetics, and its potential applications for gene therapy.

'The Basics for Gene Therapy' sets out to address this need. The first few chapters deal with the genetic make up of the nucleus and the mechanisms behind the cell cycle. The book then explains the molecular techniques used to manipulate these processes, before detailing the potential applications of gene therapy, the vectors that can be used, and some specific clinical scenarios. The final section contains an extensive bibliography, a list of vendors providing laboratory supplies, and addresses of Internet sites pertaining to the subject. The early sections are relatively comprehensive and act as an excellent introduction to the field of molecular genetics for an interested medic/scientist with limited previous experience in the subject. This book,

however, contains no more information than would be taught on most undergraduate courses, and certainly is not as detailed as a recent edition of the standard textbooks. Likewise, the discussion of disease targets for gene therapy is very brief, and the results of current trials will become dated in the very near future. In contrast, the section detailing the vectors used for gene therapy is more detailed and provides an excellent comparison of the advantages / disadvantages associated with each. One of the selling points highlighted on the back cover is the list of relevant Internet sites and industry contact details. I am not convinced: surely it is easier and more reliable to find up-to-date information on available web sites using an Internet search engine. Likewise, the address of a company that could supply PCR products is unlikely to be of use to the target audience of this book. Finally, despite the narrative style, I found the text of many sections very difficult to penetrate with overlong sentences and poor syntax.

In conclusion, the book provides a useful introduction to the terminology of molecular biology and the basics of gene therapy. However, despite its user-friendly format I found it no easier to read than many more detailed alternatives.

JAMES LINDSAY

*The Kennedy Institute of Rheumatology Division  
Imperial College School of Medicine  
1 Aspenlea Road  
London W6 8LH  
U.K.*

## Books Received

**The Triumph of Sociobiology.** John Alcock. Oxford University Press, New York. 2001. Pp. 257. Price £16.95, hardback. ISBN 0-19-514383-3.

**The Basis for Gene Therapy.** Walter J. Burdette. Charles C. Thomas Publisher Ltd., USA. 2001. Pp. 204. Price \$33.95, paperback. ISBN 0-398-07159-4.

**Forensic DNA Typing: Biology and Technology Behind STR Markers.** John M. Butler. Academic Press, London. 2001. Pp. 322. Price \$69.95, hardback. ISBN 0-12-147951-X.

**Principles of Cell Proliferation.** John K. Heath. Blackwell Science Ltd., Oxford. 2001. Pp. 137. Price £22.50, paperback. ISBN 0-632-04886-7.

**Genes, Categories, and Species: The Evolutionary and Cognitive Causes of the Species Problem.** Jody Hey. Oxford University Press, New York. 2001. Pp. 217. Price £34.95, hardback. ISBN 0-19-514477-5.

**Functional Genomics: A Practical Approach.** Stephen P. Hunt and Frederick J. Livesey (eds). Oxford University Press, New

York. 2001. Pp. 253. Price £29.95, paperback. ISBN 0-19-963774-1.

**Phenotypic Plasticity: Beyond Nature and Nurture.** Massimo Pigliucci. The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore. 2001. Pp. 328. Price \$65.00, hardback. ISBN 0-8018-6788-6.

**Human Cytogenetics: Constitutional Analysis.** D. E. Rooney (ed). Oxford University Press, New York. 2001. Pp. 282. Price £32.50, paperback. ISBN 0-19-963839-X.

**Human Cytogenetics: Malignancy and Acquired Abnormalities.** D. E. Rooney (ed). Oxford University Press, New York. 2001. Pp. 287. Price £32.50, paperback. ISBN 0-19-963841-1.

**Essential Developmental Biology.** Jonathan M. W. Slack. Blackwell Science Ltd., Oxford. 2001. Pp. 321. Price £16.50, paperback. ISBN 0-632-05233-3.

**Gene Transcription: Mechanisms and Control.** Robert J. White. Blackwell Science Ltd., Oxford. 2000. Pp. 273. Price £29.50, paperback. ISBN 0-632-04888-3.