BOOKS RECEIVED

Microbial drug resistance

Edited by S. MITSUHASHI and H. HASHIMOTO. 1975. Baltimore, London and Tokyo: University Park Press. Pp. xvi and 566. £26.75.

This volume comprises a large number of contributions to the field of plasmid studies with particular reference to antibiotic resistance. It covers primarily the molecular and epidemiological aspects of the subject, and there are few articles that have direct clinical relevance, that is, dealing with the treatment of patients.

The majority of the papers are by workers in the plasmid field; indeed, of the 48 in this volume, 36 are of Japanese origin, and no less than 15 involve Mitsuhashi in person. The non-Japanese contributors comprise a much less wide-ranging group, and their inclusion may seem to be rather idiosyncratic. For example, few of the speakers at the outstanding Symposium organised by the American Society for Microbiology in New Orleans in January 1974 (see ASM publication "Microbiology 1974") have contributed to this volume.

It is worth raising the matter of the Japanese domination in this book for two main reasons. The first is that it was through the pioneer efforts of the Japanese—notably Watanabe, of course—that R factors were put on the scientific map (now that Watanabe is dead, where do the Japanese stand in this field?). Secondly, since most of the non-Japanese articles duplicate what has been published elsewhere in easily accessible form, do the Japanese contributions make the purchase of this book worth while?

At the same time, there is no obvious indication here of any single Japanese worker cutting new ground. Perhaps the most impressive work is slightly to one side of the main thrust of the volume, namely, the excellent studies on penicillin- and cephalosporin-hydrolysing enzymes. Sawai has been pre-eminent in this field for some time; and, of course, Umezawa is a giant among workers on antibiotics and their action. The work described by Arai is excellent, but owes its inspiration strongly to a period he spent with Clowes in the USA. Similarly, Mise's excellent paper owes a great deal to Arber. In summary then: much competent work, but nothing outstandingly original; and much that is repetitious, particularly among the non-Japanese.

This assessment helps us to answer the second question. This compilation is rather unrepresentative and should not be taken to describe the state of the plasmid art in 1976—far from it. But the volume does contain several useful summaries of work by the Japanese "plasmidologists" brought together in one place. It is, therefore, a very useful book to have available in the Library for reference. In particular, its interest to the "medieval" microbiologist is likely to be confined to those with a pretty good grounding in the arcane sophistications of molecular microbiology.

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Chemotherapy of infectious disease

By H. H. GADEBUSCH. 1975. Cleveland, Ohio: C. R. C. Press, Inc. Pp. 105. US \$29.95.

The title is misleadingly general. This short book has the specific aim of reviewing experimental methods used to evaluate chemotherapeutic agents. Its five chapters are concerned with bacterial, fungal, viral and helminthic infections, and with models for topical chemotherapy. Each chapter covers a lot of ground and has full references to the models described. The authors have, in the main, heeded their editor's injunction in trying to answer the thorny question—how useful are these models in predicting chemotherapeutic efficacy?