BOOKS RECEIVED

Chemotherapeutic strategy

Edited by D. I. EDWARDS and D. R. HISCOCK. 1983. Macmillan Press, London. Pp. xi and 232. £25.00.

When I first read the title of this book I was misled. I thought it was going to deal with the strategy of treatment with antibiotics. In fact, it is a collection of contributions to a Symposium held in the middle of 1982 on the interesting topic of the strategy of the development of chemotherapeutic agents.

As is commonly the case with 'Symposium volumes', the contents of this book are very variable. They range from the frankly perfunctory (barely 4 pages of text plus a few references from J. T. Smith on mechanisms of drug resistance) to the full and informative (about 20 pages each from S. Hammond and S. Selwyn on agents affecting membranes and cell walls, respectively), with imaginative essays by P. Wardman and J. Tollenare on the structural and physico-chemical aspects of drug design. Other articles deal with agents that attack ribosomes (Cundliffe), antibiotics affecting DNA function (Neidle), antiprotozoal and antihelminthic drugs (Newton and Howells, respectively), the therapy of anaerobic infections (A. T. Willis), cancer chemotherapy (K. Hellman) and articles by I. Stratford and G. Gregoriades on chemi- and radio-sensitisation and the use of liposomes, respectively.

Had one wanted to single out a topic not covered in this volume, yet something useful in the context of the subject under discussion, I think I would have chosen a contribution on the structure of the prokaryotic and the eukaryotic membrane. Certainly much can be inferred from Hammond's discussion of the mechanism of action of agents affecting membranes; but in practice this is a most important aspect of the strategy of the design of chemotherapeutic agents, and explains why some agents do *not* work. Thus, membrane exclusion and its molecular basis cannot be overlooked by anyone trying to design a novel agent in practice.

In fact, there is unlikely to be much in this volume that would be news to a research director in a pharmaceutical company, or a medicinal chemist working on the development of novel chemotherapeutic agents; but for the student of the subject, or for the research worker in a distinct but related field who wants to bring himself up to date, the book is very useful. Unhappily, as is all too common now, the book is unlikely to be bought by individuals: at £25.00 it is too expensive to be really worthwhile for any but the most dedicated. But as a source book on a range of relevant topics in this field of research it certainly provides a good up-dating read, and as such should be available in any library pretending to cover pre- or para-clinical medicine, biochemistry and medicinal chemistry.

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