BOOK RECEIVED

Retroviral latency

M. A. LAUGHLIN and R. J. POMERANTZ. 1994. ISBN 1-57059-034-6. R. G. Landes Co., Georgetown. Pp. 159. £69.00

This volume is one of a series of titles published by the Medical Intelligence Unit. The aim of the series is to publish the most recent information as rapidly as possible. In the case of *Retroviral latency* the manuscript was received in September 1994 and published in November 1994. To match this speed of publication the text is very much up-to-date with a number of 1994 references. Perhaps of greater importance, this book provides a most useful exposition of the cell and molecular biology of human (and to a lesser extent simian) retroviruses.

In 99 pages of text this volume presents a brief overview of retroviruses, an extensive description of HIV, a review of host determinants of retroviral gene expression and finally an overview of other human and simian retroviruses.

The section on HIV describes the genes and gene products responsible for both maintenance and rescue from latency. It describes how these factors act on and are acted upon by host cell components. There are clear descriptions of *tat*, *rev*

and LTR genes with diagrams to aid understanding. The diagrams are produced by computer graphics rather than as precise artwork, presumably to speed publication. They are understandable but not the most attractive feature of the book.

The next section covers host cell factors that control retroviral gene expression. It covers nucleosomal organisation, chromatin structure and topoisomerases. This develops our understanding of HIV transcriptional control by building on studies of murine mammary tumour virus.

In the final section there is a useful description of HIV-2 latency and expression in comparison with HIV-1. To complete the picture these are descriptions of the molecular biology of the various simian immunodeficiency viruses (SIVcpz, SIVagm, SIVsm/mac), human T-cell leukaemia viruses and spumaviruses.

This book achieves its aim of a rapidly published, up-to-date review of retrovirus latency. It is a clear exposition and easy to read. It is not a clinical treatise but does provide the information necessary for clinicians to understand retrovirus replication and latency. I enjoyed reading it but suspect it will be an institutional rather than personal book.

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