BOOKS RECEIVED

Antibiotics and other secondary metabolites. Biosynthesis and production

Edited by R. HUTTER, T. LEISINGER, J. NUESCH and W. WEHRLI. 1978. London: Academic Press Inc. Pp. xii and 255. £14.40.

This book contains the papers presented at the 5th Symposium Meeting of the Federation of European Microbiological Societies. No such collection of individual contributions could hope to cover a whole field, especially one so broad as that of secondary metabolites; therefore, of necessity, the text is largely restricted to an in-depth consideration of a few topics of current interest and development. In an attempt to set the scene and to provide the reader with essential current ideas on secondary metabolites, the first contribution defines their role, diversity and recognition. This is followed by two papers covering the ways open to the biochemist and microbiologist to increase production of selected metabolites by deregulation and by process design and control. The final two papers covering general aspects deal with the production of new structures by enzymatic transformation and the application of this technique to industrial processes.

The second and largest part of the book is concerned with the formation of specific secondary metabolites. These are tetracycline, macrolide antibiotics, rifamycin, β -lactam antibiotics (penicillin and cephalosporin) and ergot alkaloids. The genetic aspects are considered in detail for β -lactam antibiotics and ergot alkaloids.

Each contribution is complete in itself and, in this way, the book is a collection of factual reviews specifically aimed at the specialist and, in particular, the industrial biochemist concerned with problems of the biosynthesis of these metabolites on a production scale. It will, however, appeal to research workers concerned with the chemistry and application of secondary metabolites to chemotherapeutic and other applications.

The book is well produced with relatively few obvious errors, although the size of some figures, consisting of chemical formulae, has been reduced to a point where clarity has suffered. Indeed, some may find them difficult to read at all.

A. H. DADD

Hepatitis B virus antigens in tissues

By M. B. RAY. 1979. Lancaster: MTP Press, Ltd. Pp. x and 165. £9.95.

Few subjects in medical science have advanced during the last few years as rapidly as viral hepatitis, which is said to have become the most frequently cited topic in the Index Medicus. This short monograph, which is based on a thesis submitted in 1978 for the Ph.D degree of the University of Leuven, and indeed is almost presented in the style dictated by University Regulations, is devoted to the localisation, mainly by immunochemical techniques, of the various antigens of hepatitis B in the liver and in some extrahepatic sites. In this respect the book is a useful review of these procedures and a good summary of the findings and their interpretation. This is the strength of the contribution. The weakness of the book lies, for example, in details of the experimental transmission of hepatitis B to one chimpanzee in Belgium, an account of a small previously published study of treatment with fibroblast interferon of two chimpanzee carriers of hepatitis B surface antigen and a male patient with chronic active hepatitis, an attempt to review immune mechanisms in hepatitis B, and the briefest paragraph on genetic factors in hepatitis which, in fact, may be particularly important in the pathogenesis of chronic liver disease.

Histopathologists and particularly pathologists with special interest in the liver will find this book very readable and short enough to be studied with advantage.

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