BOOKS RECEIVED

Infectious and Inflammatory Diseases and Other Nonneoplastic Disorders: Guides to Clinical Aspiration Biopsy

J. F. SILVERMAN. 1991. ISBN 0-89640-207-X. Igaku-Shoin Medical Publishers, Inc., New York. Pp. 358. £75.00.

This book is the latest volume from the series *Guides to clinical aspiration biopsy*. It deals specifically with the recognition of non-neoplastic conditions from aspirated material and is aimed primarily at histopathologists and cytologists as an aid to the morphological interpretation of aspiration samples in relation to infectious disease. The book is edited by J. F. Silverman from North Carolina and most of the contributors are from centres in North Carolina or neighbouring states, giving a very American perspective.

The opening chapters provide a general overview of fine needle aspiration and its usefulness in the diagnosis of infectious disease. Chapter 3 outlines the role of the clinical microbiology laboratory and discusses the use of various specialised stains and more recently developed techniques such as immuno-staining and in-situ hybridisation. The chapter finishes with suggested protocols for processing fine needle aspirate biopsy material to ensure maximal recovery of infectious agents; these protocols give a useful summary, but reassuringly (and perhaps rather disappointingly) do not reveal any outstanding differences from what would be regarded as normal practice in the UK.

The following chapter, "Identification of infectious micro-organisms", concentrates on the use of microscopy and immuno-staining to allow the direct recognition of various organisms. However, as might be expected, each section finishes with the statement that culture is required for confirmation and further identification.

Most of the remainder of the book is devoted to a discussion of the cytopathological features of fine needle aspirates from various tissues and anatomical sites including lymph nodes, breast, head and neck, thorax, abdomen, soft tissue, bone, prostate and the central nervous system. Although there is an emphasis on the appearances in infectious conditions, much of the text, and many of the photographs, are primarily of interest to histopathologists.

The purpose of this book is to describe and summarise the cytological features of non-neoplastic aspirates for histopathologists. Despite this, it is a useful source of information for clinical microbiologists. In my experience, it is not unusual for valuable clinical material, obtained either at a surgery or by fine needle aspiration, to be wasted because of inappropriate handling and a general lack of communication between the clinician and the various laboratories involved. Purchase of this book might be a useful catalyst to stimulate clinicians, histopathologists and clinical microbiologists to develop well-defined protocols for the handling of fine needle aspirates and similar specimens, thus improving laboratory diagnosis.

J. G. M. HASTINGS

Methods in Molecular Biology, Volume 9: Protocols in Human Molecular Genetics

Edited by C. G. MATHEW. 1991. ISBN 0-89603-205-1. Humana Press. Pp. 461. £60.00.

As we all know well, it is often very difficult to provide, never mind obtain, all the necessary technical information regarding a particular technique or approach within scientific papers. This can be infuriating and inevitably leads to

time, effort and money wasted due to the omission of seemingly unimportant detail(s). *Protocols in human molecular genetics* follows in a highly successful lineage (volumes 1–8 of *Methods in molecular biology*) adopting a format aimed to fill this gap by providing many of the essential practical details.

This book would not necessarily be the immediate or natural selection of the medical microbiologist wishing to gain insights into how to use molecular biological techniques. Closer examination of the contents page may not immediately propel the microbiologist into the act of purchasing this book (possibly with the exception of chapter 28 which deftly describes PCR methods for latent virus detection; although few of us buy a book for one chapter!). However, the majority of the chapters give details of many techniques here exemplified by gains made in understanding human gene polymorphism, which already find broad application in the study of microbial pathogenesis, epidemiology and antimicrobial therapy, and in rapid diagnosis. Not all chapters may be relevant but they should not be overlooked since they are well written and can provide many subtle insights into molecular biology that may be pertinent to us all at some stage. The inevitable and frequent criticism of books of this type is that the techniques are heavily biased towards the originating laboratory's preference(s) rather than an adequate distillation of a "fool-proof" recipe, and therefore, cannot guarantee successful application in another laboratory (especially if the source of reagents cannot be reproduced identically). This is, in my opinion, often unjustified and definitely not the case with this book. Firstly, the chapters are concisely written by many researchers with extensive experience of the nuances of the techniques described, and the chapters are juxtaposed to counterbalance personal bias that may exist. For example, the enormous variety of PCR-based methods for DNA sequencing and detection of gene polymorphisms are generally very well covered. Indeed, PCR appears in some guise, if not centrally, in nearly all chapters. Secondly, anyone attempting molecular biological techniques must expect to encounter some problems. Thirdly, each technique chapter provides for this unfortunate eventuality with a section devoted to hints on how to overcome many of these initial technical hitches. If the technique does not work having used this guide, I am convinced the operators will know sufficient about the technique to have provided their own solution! My bet is that most of the intended readership will find all that is required to establish the technique readably detailed in these chapters.

Those shrewd enough not "to judge a book by its cover" will, therefore, be rewarded with what largely lives up to the editors' aim of providing sufficient depth of practical information to allow useful molecular biological techniques to be established successfully in your laboratory. Despite the not insignificant cost, this book is one that should find a useful place on your bookshelf; although I know my copy will not stay there long but will be found persistently in the possession of one or other of my colleagues or students.

M. R. WALKER

Antibiotics and Chemotherapy, Volume 45: Bacterial Meningitis

Edited by H. SCHONFELD and H. HELWIG. 1992. ISBN 3-8055-5484-2. S Karger AG, Basel. Pp. 276. £102.60.

This volume, clearly one of a series, contains 20 papers covering a wide range of topics within the spectrum of