Book reviews

Emerging Drugs: The Prospects for Improved Medicines

edited by W.C. Bowman, J.D. Fitzgerald and J.B. Taylor, Ashley Publications, 1997. £385 (x + 415 pages) ISSN 1361 9195

This is the second volume in an annual publication providing summaries of progress in key compound classes and therapeutic areas. Clearly, it is impossible for a single volume to be comprehensive in such coverage; rather, the editors have attempted to focus on a variety of 'hot' issues. Accordingly, there are 17 chapters on selected topics including, for example, prospects in the treatment of obesity (D.J. Goldstein and M.E. Trautmann), matrix metalloproteinase (MMP) inhibitors as drugs (D.E. Levy and A.M. Ezrin) and treatment of *Helicobacter pylori* infections (C.J. Hawkey).

In each chapter, the authors have attempted not only to summarize the state of the art from a research perspective but also to convey the current competitive status of the relevant industrial pipelines. In addition, some chapters include more detailed information on prospects for drug development, for example through inclusion of geographical market information on asthma in the chapter on PDE 4 inhibitors and inflammatory diseases (F.B. de Brito, J.E. Souness and P.J. Warne) or the summary table in the chapter on MMP inhibitors on a range of potential development issues (such as pharmaceutics, pharmacokinetics and clinical end-points). Three indexes are provided, of authors, companies and therapeutic areas.

This volume is a collection of topical and useful summaries, providing snapshots of a range of areas of interest within the pharmaceutical industry. It will no doubt find its way onto many company shelves.

David Hughes

Modern Strategy for Preclinical Pharmaceutical R&D

by David Cavalla with contributions by John Flack and Richard Jennings, John Wiley & Sons, 1997. £45 (ix + 218 pages) ISBN 0 471 97117 0

The corporate dynamics of the 1990s have shown that there are many ways forward for the industry beyond the traditional model of the centralized monolithic research facility. Indeed, in response to continued economic pressure and to entirely new discovery paradigms, the industry is discovering new collaborative ways of working that are not only cost-effective but will also allow much greater access to the plethora of targets and compound libraries arising from the new technologies. For example, SmithKline Beecham recently opened their centralized facility in Harlow (UK) but remain committed to external deals with academic and industrial partners. Indeed, such arrangements account for 22% of the company's research budget, even excluding the Human Genome Sciences deal. The concern expressed in this book is that the way forward for the industry has yet to be established clearly and that many companies are still clinging to the tenets of past decades in determining their strategy. *Modern Strategy for Preclinical Pharmaceutical R&D* attempts to bring some order to the chaos.

The first thing that is pointed out by the principal author is that modern research strategy should be the concern of the 'indians' as well as the 'chiefs', for whom this is the traditional domain. It is appropriate, therefore, that the book opens with a useful chapter summarizing the pharmaceutical development process. This is a practical and readily understood guide to the pipeline processes, from discovery through preclinical and clinical development to market, with useful examples and commentary throughout.

None of the major companies is now, in itself, big enough to exploit the wealth of opportunities that have arisen from the new discovery technologies of genomics, bioinformatics, high-throughput screening and combinatorial chemistry. The 'meat' of the book therefore explores the huge potential of collaboration and partnership deals in enabling exploitation of new technologies. The main chapters look at the pros and cons of contracts and collaborations and examine the different types of organization that become involved in such deals, such as clinical research organizations, academic centres, small research companies and the 'virtual' research company. The authors highlight the successes, dilemmas and controversies involved in such arrangements, and illustrate these with numerous contemporary examples.

Overall, the book provides a detailed look at the science and the business of preclinical R&D. In such a complex and evolving environment, it is a little too much to expect to be given all of the solutions, but this book does put into context many of the current challenges facing the industry. It is a current, competent and relatively inexpensive portrayal of 'the big picture'.

David Hughes