

It is difficult to gauge the readership of this book since the price precludes purchase by the interested general reader and the contents will be familiar to workers in the field. As a library acquisition, however, the volume would be useful to a newcomer to the field and of considerable value in teaching.

In general, therefore, despite its exciting title, the contents of this book are rather uninspiring. It should be noted, however, that this is not due to any fault in the individual contributions but purely due to the amount of exposure these topics have already received. A more speculative volume reviewing the possible roles of less well known microbial enzymes or a more detailed examination of molecular mechanisms might have been more timely.

K. L. Jones

Dietary Fibre. Edited by G. G. Birch and K. J. Parker, Applied Science Publishers Ltd, London, 1983. xi + 304 pp. Price: £28.00.

This book represents a collection of papers presented at the 13th Annual International Symposium held at the University of Reading, National College of Food Technology, Weybridge, Surrey, from 29th to 31st March, 1982.

In the early 1970s, Drs Burkitt and Trowell developed the dietary fibre hypothesis from observations that the incidence of certain 'diseases of affluence' was linked to a diet low in dietary fibre. In the intervening years to the present day, a considerable amount of research effort has gone into testing this hypothesis. This book provides a comprehensive and detailed overview of most aspects of this subject. Each chapter is written in the form of a well-referenced review, with or without original data, by a leading scientist or medical practitioner with research or clinical experience in his field. Areas where there is a lack of knowledge, and therefore a need for more research, are pinpointed.

On a personal note, although the order of presentation of papers follows the order of the Symposium, for the book I would have preferred the first and second chapters to have been reversed and the chapter by D. P. Burkitt on 'The development of the dietary fibre hypothesis' to have been followed by the chapter by D. A. T. Southgate and Julia M. Penson on 'Testing the dietary fibre hypothesis'. Also, it seems more logical to me to have articles on product development, like 'Elevation of "fibre" in

bread by guar addition' by E. C. Apling and P. R. Ellis, and 'The role of dietary fibre in food product formulation' by W. D. B. Hamilton, towards the end. I felt that the rather long chapter (52 pages) on 'The chemistry of plant cell walls' by R. R. Selvendran was perhaps too detailed and could have benefited from greater selectivity of content and reference sources.

Other chapters deal with the analytical determination of dietary fibre, its physical properties and the use of dietary fibre in clinical practice. In a short but very readable chapter on 'Dietary fibre as a tool of the clinician', Dr A. J. M. Bodribb, who works at Plymouth General Hospital, tells us of the outstanding therapeutic value of dietary fibre for altering large bowel function. Ninety-five per cent of the patients he deals with, who have problems in this respect, are now recommended to take a high fibre diet. More esoteric topics in the book range from 'The influence of dietary fibre on xenobiotic metabolism by gut bacteria' by Marie E. Coates to 'Determination of intestinal gas excretion' by Sharon E. Fleming and Doris H. Calloway. Topics which do not receive much attention, with respect to dietary fibre, are coronary heart disease, altered bile salt metabolism (although the effects of dietary fibre on cholesterol metabolism are dealt with by Dr Coates), and weight control.

In dealing with such a diverse subject, a preface would have been useful to link all the chapters together. Indeed, a description of the book on the front flap of the dust cover could have formed the basis of such an introduction. The book is clearly printed, on good quality paper, with well-drawn figures and well-laid-out tables. The editors are to be congratulated on compiling such an authoritative book. It will be essential for all university and college libraries, a good reference book for the nutritionist and the food scientist with interest in nutrition, as well as for the clinical research worker.

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