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Book review

Analysis of Sterols by *L. John Goad and Toshihiro Akihisa*. Blackie Academic and Professional, London, 1997; pp. xvii +437; price £89.00; ISBN 0 7514 0230 3.

Although several books have been published on the analysis of steroids in general and especially of hormonal steroids, this is the first book dealing exclusively with sterols which is one of the most important groups of steroidal compounds. There are two main lines in the research of sterols which require the use of up-to-date analytical techniques: (a) the determination of cholesterol in body fluids and tissues as an important tool in clinical diagnostics and (b) the detection, isolation and structure elucidation of new sterols in plants, algae, fungi and marine organisms and the investigation of their biosynthesis and physiological role. The authors of the present book are outstanding experts of the second field; this is certainly the reason why they focus on this line.

Of the twelve chapters and four appendices of the book, two chapters and three appendices present very useful general information on the nomenclature, biosynthesis, trivial names, structures, physical data and natural sources of sterols and triterpenes. One chapter deals with sample preparation while spectroscopic and diffractometric methods are covered in six comprehensive chapters. Thin-layer, column, high-performance liquid and gas-chromatographic methods are discussed in three chapters. In accordance with the general aims of the book, in these chapters the treatment of the matter is focused on separation. The quantitative aspects of sterol analysis are condensed into a short appendix.

The book is well written and produced. It contains very useful information on sterols and their analysis and for this reason it can be recommended to biochemists and analysts dealing with this important group of natural products especially for those who deal with the search for new sterols.

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