The Chemistry, Biology, and Medical Applications of Hyaluronan and Its Derivatives. Edited by T. C. Laurent. Portland Press, London, U.K. 1998. xvi + 341 pp. 17 × 25 cm. ISBN 1-85578-119-0. $127.50.

This book compiles the proceedings of work presented at the International Conference on Hyaluronan at the Wenner−Gren Center in Stockholm, Sweden. It is composed of 34 chapters written by 61 authors who are the world's experts on hyaluronan. Throughout the book the important contributions of Dr. Endre Balasz in discovering and elucidating the chemistry and biology of hyaluronan are extensively highlighted. The contributed chapters are grouped into subsections that focus on physicochemical properties, biosynthesis, protein binding, hyaluronan receptors, cellular interactions, medical applications, and hyaluronan as a clinical marker. Each subsection contains 4-6 well-written contributions which provide background and current data concerning on-going research on hyaluronan. The subsection on hyaluronan−protein interactions is notable for its comprehensive review of the numerous proteins that bind hyaluronan. However, it is the in-depth coverage of basic research in combination with the biomedical applications dealt with in this book that provides the reader with a firm grasp of the state-of-the-art in hyaluronan research.

This book would complement the library of any laboratory involved in research in extracellular matrixes, biomaterials, advanced drug delivery systems, and glycobiochemistry. I highly recommend it, both to newcomers and to experienced researchers in these fields of study.

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The Alkaloids. Volume 51. Chemistry and Biology. Edited by Geoffrey A. Cordell. Academic Press, San Diego, CA. 1998. x + 439 pp. 15.5 × 23.5 cm. ISBN 0-12-469551-5. $135.

The Alkaloids is a familiar series, dating to 1950. The editor describes this latest addition as being in a traditional motif covering isolation, structure elucidation, and synthetic studies on four groups: aspidospermine, *Cephalotaxus*, ipecac, and Amaryllidaceae alkaloids. To summarize the editor further, a significant theme in all chapters is the substantial number of new alkaloids and the emphasis on enantioselective synthesis.

The chapter on aspidospermine alkaloids, by J. E. Saxton, is the longest. This field was last reviewed in this series 20 years ago. The isolations of some 240 alkaloids in the 1977−1996 period are listed in an 18-page tabulation, not all of them being new structures. The literature on *Cephalotaxus* alkaloids is updated from 1984, when they were last covered in this series. As well as the traditional sections, there is also a section on pharmacological and clinical studies. Cephalotaxine esters such as homoharringtonine are undergoing trials as antileukemic agents. This section also reviews the unnatural esters synthesized in China for leukemia trials. The ipecac alkaloids, reviewed by T. Fujii and M. Ohba, comprise the shortest section. The area is updated from 1983, with particular emphasis on biosynthetic and pharmacological studies. Amaryllis alkaloids were last covered in Volume 30 (1987). This area is updated by O. Hoshino, each subgroup of alkaloids being discussed in terms of isolation, structure elucidation, synthetic studies, and biological activity.

The book is copiously illustrated, with structural drawings comprising almost half of the book. The tables occupy another 8%, and of course, each chapter is fully referenced. As with the other volumes in this series, this book takes its place as standard reference material for the selected groups of alkaloids.

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