

## Book Reviews

### **Craniofacial Development, 5th edn**

G. H. Sperber.

BC Decker Inc., Hamilton, Ontario; London 2001

220 pp., £26.95 (pb)

ISBN 1-55009-127-1.

The arrival of this book, a new edition of a classic text, has been eagerly anticipated by both academics specializing in oral biology, and by undergraduate and postgraduate students who are required to study craniofacial development. Indeed, the present reviewer is indebted to the author for guiding his undergraduate studies nearly 30 years ago! The book appears very different from previous editions. It has a larger format and comes with a CD-ROM that not only includes the complete text and illustrations, but also contains three-dimensional moving images showing embryo reconstructions. My students, on perusing the book, were impressed by the CD-ROM, but commented that the layout, typography, and illustrations within the book itself appeared somewhat 'old fashioned'. A little colour in the illustrations would undoubtedly have helped.

Although the author and publisher claim that the 'target audience' for this book has not changed, oral biology, and its position in the dental curriculum has radically changed, so much so that the need for such a specialist textbook might be questioned. In this respect, many of today's undergraduate oral biology/dental courses require a more generalist approach that, although seemingly satisfied by the contents of this book, is already adequately covered by existing texts. Consequently, such texts would be more attractive to the student because their coverage of oral biology is wide-ranging and extends beyond just craniofacial development. For the postgraduate, however, more specialist texts are required to act either as reference texts, or to cover and review recent research, to highlight where controversy remains, and to indicate where there is lack

of knowledge. According to the publisher's 'blurb', the present edition differs from previous editions in having an increased emphasis on congenital malformations and in being cognisant of many of the recent advances in craniofacial development. The reviewer cannot quarrel with the increased emphasis on craniofacial abnormalities and this is surely an attractive feature of the book. Regrettably, however, the book in its present form seems to lack scientific credibility. For example, there is only sparse mention (except within the bibliographies and in relation to general embryology) of homeobox genes, of the influence of growth factors, of the experimental approach to craniofacial research. Furthermore, the sections on the development of the lip and palate, and on the development of the teeth and of occlusion miss significant recent work. Indeed, one of the features of craniofacial developmental research is the way in which genetics, biochemistry, and molecular biology, and morphological studies are now combining to improve our knowledge. Thus, whilst I would agree with the author that advances in craniofacial biology require 'a substantial understanding of prenatal development morphogenesis', what is presently called for is a more 'holistic' approach. Nevertheless, if one needs to brush up on basic craniofacial morphogenesis and requires some references for a deeper search of the literature, then this book is a good starting place. Despite the criticisms, we should therefore welcome the re-appearance of this book on the market since, with goodwill from the publishers, future editions will provide opportunities to remedy any deficiencies—even if a multi-authored approach may eventually be required to encompass the range and depth of research now being carried out in craniofacial development.

BERNARD MOXHAM  
Cardiff