

## Book Review

**ANALYSIS FOR DRUGS AND METABOLITES INCLUDING ANTI-INFECTIVE AGENTS.** By E. Reid and I.D. Wilson (Eds), Royal Society of Chemistry, 1990. ISBN: 0 85186 956 4. Price: £62.50.

This book is the fairly promptly printed proceedings of the Eighth International Bioanalytical Forum, held in Guildford in September 1989. As such it is the 20th in the series called "Methodological Surveys in Biochemistry and Analysis", and although this is the first of the series published by the Royal Society of Chemistry, it retains much of the style and most of the advantages and idiosyncrasies of its predecessors. It has three main sections on Assay Validation, Anti-Infective Drugs and their Metabolites, and a catch-all section on Various Drugs and Metabolites. The first section is the shortest but, we are told by the Senior Editor, was the highlight of the Forum — this seems a little hard on the other contributors and is clearly not true. There are some good papers on assay validation, and an interesting though small survey of current statistical practices in pharmaceutical company laboratories. But the material is spoilt rather than enhanced by the reporting of the informal discussions which followed the papers, and by apparently random and not always clear or accurate editorial additions or amendments. Much of the discussion of statistical methods is distressingly but perhaps not surprisingly naive, there are crucial misprints and errors in formulae, and familiar problems of nomen-

clature and symbols. The equation for a straight line is given three different sets of symbols within a few pages: this does not deter the Editor from admonishing his readers on the use of the term reproducibility, which he seems to confuse with robustness, a completely separate statistical concept.

The two remaining sections of the book deal with analytical methods rather than with data handling, and a very wide range of analytes and methods is covered. Inevitably, some papers show more originality than others, but the best are very good indeed. In each section the principal papers are followed by "Notes and Comments", though some of these seemed to be indistinguishable from the papers in either length or quality. Indeed, some of the most original and interesting papers come at the very end of the book. They include contributions on the use of immobilized antibodies as HPLC pre-columns, on laser-induced fluorescence methods, and a possible biosensor for the enantiomers of warfarin. The book contains both subject and analyte indices, each with a slightly impenetrable style of its own. I particularly liked two cross-referencing entries in the subject index: "Costing, see Work" (how very sad, but very true!) and — even nicer — "Screening, see Horse". There could be no better example of the style of this irritating but potentially valuable volume. There is certainly some gold here, but the reader must be prepared to be a patient and expert miner to get at it.

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