New Books

L.A. Witting and J.F. Gerecht, Book Review Editors

Cholesterol Metabolism and Lipolytic Enzymes, Edited by J. Polonovski (Masson Publishing, USA Inc., New York, 1977, 211 p., $26).

The 14 chapters in this book were presented at the 19th International Congress on the Biochemistry of Lipids in September 1976. In contrast to most reports on symposia, the quality is uniformly excellent; but as with many of these publications, some of the reviews have been published elsewhere by the same authors.

The main topics covered are as indicated in the title. Discussed are: effects of hormones on cholesterol synthesis, Avigan; control of hepatic liver biosynthesis, Gould; the lesion in familial hypercholesterolemia, Myant; cholesterol catabolism, Mosbach; conjugated bile acids, Hofmann; cholesterol dynamics, Chevallier; cholesterol exchanges, Boyd et al.; interactions of lipoproteins and endothelial cells, the Steins; LCAT and cholesterol, Glomset and Verdery; lipoprotein lipase and chylomicron clearance, Scow et al.; activation of lipoprotein lipase, the Fieldings; the lipase-colipase system, Borgstrom; the lipase-colipase system at interfaces, Chapus et al.; and regulation of phospholipase A_2 at interfaces, de Haas et al.

The chapter by Mosbach is an excellent review of recent research on the low density lipoprotein receptor and its relationship to familial hypocholesterolemia. Chevallier describes a model for cholesterol metabolism which is amenable to computer analysis and presents data therefrom. All of the chapters on lipases are excellent. The chapters upon which I did not comment are also good, but I am more interested in lipases.

This book will be useful to clinicians, lipid biochemists, and enzymologists, but the cost of the relatively slim volume may limit its purchase primarily to institutions.

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Cholesterol, John R. Sabine (Marcel Dekker, Inc., New York, NY, 1977, 489 p., $25).

A book written entirely by a single author avoids the problems of uneven style, overlapping coverage, and conflicting interpretations so often seen when an editor recruits contributors. Sabine covers his subject in 12 chapters: The Role of Cholesterol in Mammalian Systems (in terms of coverage this could have been titled Cholesterol in Membranes); Methods in Cholesterol Research; Digestion/Absorption/Transport/Storage; Biosynthesis; Physiological Control Over Biosynthesis; Pharmacological Control Over Biosynthesis; Metabolism and Excretion; Cholesterol in the Blood; Cholesterol and Atherosclerosis, Cholesterol and Cancer; Cholesterol and Gallstone Disease; and Cholesterol and the Nervous System. Very brief first and fourteenth chapters constitute a mild, understated attack on past and current research in the area.

Sabine starts by suggesting that the problem with research in this area is that the wrong questions are being asked. Through a thorough, comprehensive review of the entire area he seeks to suggest alternatives. In particular Sabine is concerned with the obsession regarding elevated serum cholesterol. The huge national diet and drug studies have shown how little is to be gained by attempts to slightly (10-15%) lower serum cholesterol values. Certainly there is merit to the suggestion that attention be focused on the biochemical or physiological processes producing elevated levels. Hypothetical treatment modalities directed toward cholesterol levels in atherosclerosis and cancer may easily conflict.

At times one has the feeling that in an effort to cover such a large area the author has provided somewhat shallow coverage in specific areas. For instance, most of the drugs affecting cholesterol biosynthesis are passed over in one to two sentences each. The periodic injections of mildly expressed personal opinion and philosophy are not particularly obtrusive.

The author's style is usually rather relaxed and readable. One relatively early three sentence paragraph that runs about 180 words is not typical of the rest of the book but 40-50 word sentences crop up regularly. All references, which are rather minimal in number, are cited solely by number and gathered (91 pages) at the end with the indices. The absence of names and/or dates as clues to the paper being cited tends to be rather frustrating in places, and it is inconvenient to be searching through the back of the book.

Two books entitled "Cholesterol" (one by R.P. Cook and the other by D. Kritchevsky) appeared in 1958. The current version resembles but does not cite that by Kritchevsky. This book should be required reading for every investigator doing research on atherosclerosis.

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