
 Book reviews

Zaleski, M. B.; Dubiski, S.; Niles, E. G.; Cunningham R. K.: Immunogenetics. Boston, London, Melbourne, Toronto: Pitman 1983. XVI + 514 pp., several figs., several tabs.

By their statement (on page 62) that "immunogenetics studies the determinants and inheritance of moieties that elicit an immune response i.e. antigens, and the determination and inheritance of the capability to respond (responsiveness) to a variety of antigens" the authors have extended the field of immunogenetics substantially. Everyone will agree with the second part of the sentence (genetics of the immune response). Traditionally, the immunogeneticist studies only those antigens that may vary from one individual to another within the same species. These antigens may evoke an immune response after intraspecific transplantation. Such antigens are present in the blood groups, the major and minor histocompatibility systems and the immunoglobulin allotypes. They may also be present on neoplastic cells. Other antigens are important in the regulation of the immune response such as idiotypes, T and B lymphocyte subset antigens. All these antigens, as well as the important Ir phenomenon, are described and discussed extensively. Therefore, the book represents a well of information not only on human and rodent immunogenetics. The introductory chapters on genetics and immunology seem superfluous. The language is clear. The illustrations are simple but informative.

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Brewer, G. J.; Sing, C. F.: Genetics. Reading (Mass.), Menlo Park (Cal.), London, Amsterdam, Don Mills (Ont.), Sydney: Addison-Wesley 1983. XIII + 729 pp. + appendix, several figs., several tabs.

This book is yet another of several new books where the whole spectrum of Genetics is covered in one volume. Of necessity such volumes become rather superficial. In many cases it is questionable if books of this kind contribute

valuable information to students. Possibly it can be used as a reference guide for teachers setting up general courses in genetics.

Some features of this new volume are really excellent, as e.g. the glossary part at the end of the volume. Also, many of the figures, although rather cursory, may well be used in the teaching of basic courses in genetics. Many of the figures are reproductions from other excellent books or articles, obviously once drawn they can be used with permission from other publishers.

The authors have obviously given much thought to examples given in the text. Thus one finds that here also the whole field of genetics is covered. Unfortunately, however, many parts of genetics have become so complicated that single examples of studies may not give a good enough picture of the problems involved. For example, in quantitative genetics there are examples given of heritability studies on page 579 where both plants and animals are included. Particularly concerning plants such studies are very much dependent on trials and mating designs. In the text on the analysis of heritability some of the pitfalls are pointed out, but in tables, like the one on page 579, values should be given together with standard deviations which often are very large in plants.

On the other hand, some of the newest applications of molecular genetics, like genetic engineering, is covered only very briefly. For example, on page 93, the industrial and agricultural applications are not given more than 1/3 page, which is far too little for this interesting new aspect of genetics.

Summarizing, it becomes more and more obvious that genetics has grown so broad-based that covering it within some 700 pages like in this book becomes a real problem. The authors have done a good job on a very difficult subject. Probably books of this kind may in future years be compensated for by others more specialized on certain fields of the exciting world of genetics.

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