

which also contains strong caveats and useful pointers to future research. Where possible, it would be helpful if a similar style and balance were to be used throughout the next sister volume, which we may hope to see in less than a decade, given the rapid growth in this field.

JENNY BARNA

Gene Therapy Protocols. Methods In Molecular Medicine. Editor Paul D Robbins. (Pb \$74.50.) USA: Humana Press. 1996. ISBN 0-896-03307-4.

During recent years, the field of gene therapy has evolved into an area of intense research. Investigations in the field cover a wide range of disciplines into delivery vehicles (involving chemical, biochemical, and virological studies), administration of genetic material, as well as elucidating the genetic causes of disease. Publications such as "Gene Therapy Protocols" are invaluable, bringing together information from an extremely wide source of reference in one volume. In addition it presents up to date protocols used in gene therapeutic approaches and includes useful notes and background information on the subject.

The title of the book implies that it is simply a collection of methods used for gene transfer, with individual chapter headings being somewhat deceptive. One could be forgiven for thinking how, for example, "Methods for targeted gene transfer to liver using DNA-protein complexes" (chapter 10) would be applicable to other areas. Indeed, though this chapter concentrates its information on the subject in the title, the techniques outlined are available to modification for other applications.

The content matter of the book is impressive. There are representative chapters for almost all aspects of current research in gene therapy, including generation of vectors, vector delivery (ex vivo and in vivo), and cancer gene therapy. Additionally, there are details regarding histological examination of tissues, cell biology, and cancer genetics.

The notes sections at the end of each chapter can be particularly useful. Contained in these sections are details regarding the parameters which it is necessary to consider for optimisation of the systems. For example, a note at the end of chapter 8 ("Methods for liposome-mediated gene transfer to the arterial wall") outlines the necessity of altering the DNA:lipid ratio for each cell line and each lipid formulation. While this may be obvious to some readers, it may be of great relevance to others.

It is difficult to suggest who the book would be most suitable for. To the casual reader or student, it may appear difficult reading, but sufficient background information is contained to maintain their interest. Similarly, to the researcher in the field, some areas may appear tedious, but again the ample detail should keep their attention.

In summary this book is a valuable addition to a library or laboratory involved in gene therapy research and should be read by a significant cross section of students and academics owing to both the wide breadth and detailed nature of the information contained.

JEFF DREW
J GEORGE DICKSON

NOTICES

China's eugenics law. A position statement of the Canadian College of Medical Geneticists

Preamble. The Canadian College of Medical Geneticists appreciates the aim of the Chinese Government to reduce the frequency of serious, genetically determined disorders in the population, but does not believe that to impose restrictions on reproduction of at risk couples is a good way to achieve this end, since (a) for most serious genetic disorders, preventing reproduction of those affected by, or carrying, the alleles for such disorders will not achieve significant reductions in frequency of those disorders, since they are already rare, for most of them the probability of occurrence in the offspring of affected individuals is low, and selection against recessively inherited disorders is very ineffective; (b) for the minority of serious genetic disorders that are not rare, and for which the carriers can be detected, programmes of voluntary genetic screening, counselling, and prenatal diagnosis can achieve major reductions in frequency.

Therefore, the CCMG supports any measures that will improve communications with Chinese geneticists, physicians, and legislators, including the training of students, collaborative research programmes, and attendance at scientific meetings, with the aim of helping to persuade the Chinese government to replace its programme of negative eugenics with a programme of public education, genetic screening, and voluntary prenatal diagnosis.

This statement was prepared by the Ethics and Public Policy Committee of the Canadian College of Medical Geneticists and endorsed by its Board of Directors, June 1997.

GENATLAS on line

The database GENATLAS is now open on the web, through the server INFOBIOTEN, at the following address: <http://www.infobiogen.fr>

The GENATLAS database compiles, from published reports, the information relevant to the mapping of genes, diseases, and markers. Further information is provided on the category to which the objects belong, that is, growth factor, their structure, polymorphism, function, their spatiotemporal or differential (imprinting) expression. These features contribute to the specificity of GENATLAS as well as the strong emphasis put on the clinical disorders. They are classified by organ, tissue, or affected system (for example, eye disease) and according to their category. Besides the mendelian diseases, chromosomal rearrangements and breakpoints associated with developmental abnormalities or malignancies are compiled in GENATLAS. The information relative to genes, diseases, and objects is accompanied by pertinent citations, as well as by linkage data, maps, and information on comparative mapping edited by John H

Edwards. GENATLAS is interactively linked to the Location Database of Newton E Morton. GENATLAS is also linked to OMIM, Medline, and the nucleotide sequence databases.

Interested people are kindly requested to refer to the presentation on GENATLAS, on the web, to become acquainted with GENATLAS (see About) and to make their advice, comments, and criticism known to Professor Jean Frézal, editor (Service de Génétique Médicale, Hôpital des Enfants Malades, 149 rue de Sèvres, 75743 Paris cedex 15, France. Tel: 01 44 49 51 54, Telecopie: 01 40 56 34 97. E mail: frezalj@necker.fr

GENATLAS is also incorporated into a CD-ROM with PC and Macintosh versions.

GID, Genome Interactive Databases

GID gathers the GENATLAS and comparative directories into the CEPH (index, lod, YACs) databases, to the GENETHON microsatellites database and to the Location Data Base (LDB).

Publisher: John Libbey Eurotext, 127 avenue de la République, 92120 Montrouge, France. Tel: 00 (0)1 46 73 06 60. Fax: 00 (0)1 40 84 09 99.

The newest issue of GID will be available in September.

IMGT database

IMGT, the international ImMunoGeneTics database, announces a standardised description of allele polymorphisms and mutations for all immunoglobulin and T cell receptor V-REGIONS of all species, based on the IMGT unique numbering (IMGT NEWS, March 1997). Allele alignments and tables for the human IGH, IGK, and IGL V-REGIONS are freely available at IMGT <http://imgt.cnusc.fr:8104>.

IMGT initiator and coordinator: Professor Marie-Paule Lefranc, Laboratoire d'ImmunoGénétique Moléculaire, LIGM, UMR 5535 (CNRS - Université Montpellier II), 1919 route de Mende, 34293 Montpellier Cedex 5, France. Tel: +33 (0)4 67 61 36 34. Fax: +33 (0)4 67 04 02 31. E-mail: lefranc@ligm.crbm.cnrs.mop.fr

IMGT reference: Giudicelli *et al.* *Nucleic Acids Res* 1997;25:206-11.

11th Course of the International School of Biomedical Sciences

The Institut Louis-Jeantet d'histoire de la médecine in collaboration with the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine, London, and the support of the Fondation Marcel Mérieux and the Fondation Louis-Jeantet de médecine, is organising the 11th Course of the International School of Biomedical Sciences on the subject "The burdens of the past: heredity in medicine from constitution to molecular genetics". The course will be held at the Pensières Conference Centre (Fondation Mérieux), Annecy, France on 1-10 July 1998. Applications should be sent by 30 April 1998 to Institut Louis-Jeantet d'histoire de la médecine, CMU, Case postale, 1211 Genève 4, Switzerland. Tel: +41.22.702.57.90. Fax: +41.22.702.57.92. E-mail: Bernardino.Fantini@medecine.unige.ch