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Book Review

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Molecules and Medicine

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This book is intended for a broad readership and is concerned with the discovery and use of more than one hundred of the most important molecules used in medicine. It covers chemical, biological, research and medical aspects. It limits itself to centamolecules having molecular weights in the hundreds not thousands. Each medicine described is given normally one page. Chemists having a reasonable interest and curiosity about the wider aspects of the subject will enjoy reading and possessing this book. Helpfully the protein structures given are in the public domain and may be downloaded.

The work is intended for a "broad readership" defined by the authors as including college graduates and researchers in science and medicine. The level of the work is very suitable for such a readership. The authors also aspire that the work will be useful to the "educated lay person" and as such it also provides an

excellent short primer to chemical structures and reactions. This is well presented in colour and design and I think that a motivated reader without much science would be able to take in enough of this so as to understand the chemistry and uses of the selected drug molecules. It probably isn't entirely necessary to understand everything of the science, as the descriptive text is very clear. However, as always, it would be much more useful and satisfying with some knowledge of chemical principles.

My guess is that non scientists will find it a hard going, which is a pity, as it is to such individuals that a greater scientific outreach would be beneficial. Lay people who read this book would then understand a good deal more about chemistry and drugs but it might require a bigger effort than most would put in.

I would definitely recommend this book to anyone with approximately first year college scientific background. It will make them proud of their subject and help them explain it better to their non science friends. This work will probably, as the authors hope, attract young and creative people into the subject.

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