

Book Review

Drug Discovery—A History; by Walter Sneader, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, Chichester, West Sussex, England, 2005, ISBN: 0-471-89980-1, Soft Bound, 468 Pages

Bringing medications to market is a time consuming and expensive endeavor, costing hundreds of millions of dollars. The book *Drug Discovery—A History* by Walter Sneader is a review of the scientific history of drug exploration. This text helps the reader to understand why the drug discovery and development process is so expensive and provides the foundation to speculate as to what the future holds. This informative book gives a brief synopsis on the discovery of many drugs and drug classes and, at times, delves deeper into milestone discoveries. The investigators, as well as how the investigation process has changed with time, are also discussed.

This book is divided into three parts. Beginning with the prehistoric past and continuing through different historical eras, Sneader provides examples of early drug use and discovery. Next, naturally occurring drugs are divided into three groups: phytochemicals,

biochemicals, and drugs from micro-organisms. Lastly, synthetic drugs are covered from their start in the dye industry. Serendipity is a major theme found in the book to which the author devotes two chapters, one on discoveries made from the observations of patients and the other chapter concerning discoveries in the lab.

An extensive index and many references are included. The book is written in such a way that anyone with an interest in this subject matter will be able to understand. Chemical structures are used so as not to overwhelm the non-scientific reader and yet serve as an aid when explaining how various drugs were manipulated for desired results. The scientist or lay person wanting a general background on the history of discovery, as well as a glimpse of what is in store for the future, will find this book useful.

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