

process. However, he suggested that in future we will have to consider the potential of high-throughput solution-phase synthesis as a serious alternative, especially when solid-phase chemistry cannot be applied or when larger quantities are necessary.

This very successful conference provided helpful advice for beginners and experts. Some very useful conclusions concerning important issues such as

sample sizes, mixtures versus single compounds, diversity and solution-phase versus solid-phase synthesis were drawn, and the gap between combinatorial chemistry and automation was successfully filled.

John Nielsen

Department of Organic Chemistry

Building 201

The Technical University of Denmark

DK-2800 Lyngby, Denmark

REFERENCES

- 1 Matthes, H.W.D. *et al.* (1984) *EMBO J.* 3, 801–805
- 2 Geysen, H.M., Meloen, R.H. and Barteling, S.J. (1984) *Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. U. S. A.* 81, 3998–4002
- 3 Furka, A. *et al.* (1988) in *14th Int. Congr. Biochem.*, p 47, W. de Gruyter
- 4 Furka, A. *et al.* (1988) in *10th Int. Symp. Med. Chem.*, p 288, Elsevier
- 5 Bourel, L. *et al.* (1996) *Tetrahedron Lett.* 37, 4145–4148
- 6 Tong, G. and Nielsen, J. (1996) *Bioorg. Med. Chem.* 4, 693–698

Book review

Emerging Drugs: The Prospect for Improved Medicines edited by W.C. Bowman, J.D. Fitzgerald and J.B. Taylor, Ashley Publications, 1996. £295 (435 pages) ISSN 1361 9195

Emerging Drugs is the first of a series of annual executive briefings on topics of current research in the pharmaceutical industry. The editors have solicited 19 review articles from experts in the field. The reviews cover a diverse range of subjects across most major therapeutic areas with particular emphasis on those relating to common diseases. Topics vary from established areas of medicinal chemistry, such as COX-2 inhibitors, to more embryonic subjects such as transcription factors and prospects for developing selective antagonists. The book seeks to undertake an assessment of the degree of innovation and the associated relative risk in each area of research.

Each chapter adopts a similar format with a brief overall summary and a précis of medical need, scientific rationale and competition. An assessment of the success and value of the research area is also included. The information is provided in a concise, readable form that allows the non-expert reader to rapidly assimilate the critical issues associated with a particular therapeutic approach.

The text is supplemented with a number of very useful tables, particularly those relating to the competitive environment. These tables contain the structure and development status of lead compounds together with the relevant sources of data and patent priority information.

In each of the reviews a valiant attempt is made to assess the balance of effort and success in the research areas covered, but the criterion used to judge success (number of published patent applications) is somewhat arbitrary when the topics vary so widely. Indeed, some of the chapters cover multiple targets and this inevitably results in oversimplified generic conclusions. Sufficient detail is included, however, for the target audience to be able to make their own judgements as to the value of these data.

Sections on potential development issues and editorial analyses of potential advantages and disadvantages of each approach give a balanced and useful view. In most chapters the references are subdivided into 'very helpful' and 'essential' reading. Brief summaries of the most important references have also

been provided. These are all valuable features.

The indices have been thoughtfully subdivided to allow searches by therapy (including an interesting pun on therapeutic index!), author and company. Unfortunately, a number of typographical errors could limit the usefulness of these sections. However, in general these errors do not tarnish the quality of the information provided in the main body of the work.

Overall, this book should make an important addition to the company library, because much of the information presented here is normally difficult to find in a collated form. Readers from any discipline within the drug-hunting industry will certainly find it a valuable 'first port of call' for background information.

The second volume of *Emerging Drugs* is due for publication in January 1997.

Chris Hill and Phil Jones

Roche Research Centre

Welwyn Garden City, UK AL7 3AY