schedule biological assays to which the final compounds are sent. A logic system automatically selects compounds that meet a specified set of criteria, and such compounds can then be sent for secondary or tertiary screens. All the data from the assays are automatically captured and are available to the chemist.

David Chapman (Afferent Systems, San Francisco, CA, USA) presented a commercial approach to data handling. With the Afferent system, enumeration of libraries uses a reaction sequence rather than the R-group core that many other systems use. This enables some chemistry to be enumerated, such as a Diels–Alder reaction, which cannot otherwise be enumerated by R-group cores. It also allows electronic capture of synthetic protocols, which thus acts as a 'corporate memory' for future chemists. Modules that provide a single user interface for multiple synthetic instruments are also available, and new modules that will allow an integrated analytical data and biological data retrieval system are in development.

Final impressions

The meeting provided an excellent opportunity to discuss with fellow combinatorial chemists current technologies and common difficulties found in combinatorial chemistry labs. The mix of chemists from many production companies and directed R&D groups allowed cross-fertilization of techniques and chemistry. The small size allowed free discussion throughout the event. Surely many of the participants left the meeting with ideas of how to improve the workflow in their own labs.

Joseph S. Warmus
Automated Synthesis Group
Department of Chemistry
Parke-Davis Pharmaceuticals
Division of Warner Lambert
2800 Plymouth Road
Ann Arbor, MI 48105, USA
tel: +1 734 622 5466
fax: +1 734 622 3107
e-mail: Joseph.Warmus@wl.com

Book review

Clinical Trials of Genetic Therapy with Antisense DNA and DNA Vectors

Edited by Eric Wickstrom, Marcel Dekker, 1998. $185 (xvii + 427 pages, hardback) ISBN 0-8247-0085-6

In the September issue of *Drug Discovery Today*, we inadvertently gave the wrong publisher of this book reviewed by David E. Szymkowski, who, in his opening paragraph, summarizes the book in the following way:

'Coming soon after the first NDA for an antisense compound, *Clinical Trials of Genetic Therapy with Antisense DNA and DNA Vectors* is a timely and comprehensive review of the potential applications of oligonucleotide- and vector-based gene therapy to treat disease. Wickstrom has assembled contributions from 20 research groups, incorporating late-stage preclinical R&D with results from the first clinical trials of genetic therapies. Development and clinical trial data for these compounds are often not easily accessible in the scientific literature, and this book provides both a readable introduction for newcomers and a useful update for those familiar with the field.'

For the full review of this book see *Drug Discovery Today* (1998) 3, 403.

In short…

An investigational new drug application to inaugurate Phase I clinical trials of a nitric oxide (NO) neutralizing compound is to be filed by **Medinox** (San Diego, CA, USA) in early 1999.

The company claims to have developed a unique class of compound that has the ability to absorb, and thus remove, excess NO while conserving the quantities necessary for normal physiological functions. This is an alternative to blocking the NO synthase enzyme pathway, which can lead to deleterious effects.

The NO molecule acts as a signaling agent in the nervous system. An excess production of NO by neurons can contribute to fatal hypotension, arthritis, neurodegenerative diseases and brain-cell death after cerebrovascular accidents such as stroke. The company claims that if the good safety and efficacy profile of their compounds is reaffirmed through the clinical trials, a novel therapeutic prototype for the treatment of haemorrhagic shock and stroke may develop that could be routinely administered during transport of a patient to hospital. Currently, they have three compounds in preclinical development with the potential for treating a broad spectrum of disease states.