

## Book review

### **In Quest of Tomorrow's Medicines**

by Jürgen Drews, Springer-Verlag,  
1999. \$29.95 (272 pages, hardback)  
ISBN 0-387-98547-6

There can be no-one better qualified to look into the future of the pharmaceutical industry than Jürgen Drews. The former President of Global Research for Hoffmann-La Roche has a well established reputation for critical analysis of the science and business of drug development. What the title of the book doesn't reveal is that it also contains a fascinating account of the history and evolution of the pharmaceutical industry, from the use of natural substances as medicines in ancient civilizations to the present day. The book will certainly be of interest to those people working within the pharmaceutical and biotechnological industries, as well as the financial, regulatory and other associated institutions who seek to understand the big picture.

We increasingly see the industry being dominated by a small number of huge players. However, it is intriguing to look into the development of the

small enterprises and the dynamics within the chemical industry in the 19th and 20th centuries that spawned today's industry (for example, the collaboration of George K. Smith, Mahlon N. Kline and Harry B. French). It is especially interesting to note the development of the industry from entrepreneurial apothecaries and from the aniline dye industry (which itself arose from the serendipitous findings of the many uses of coal tar, a byproduct of the generation of town gas from the carbonization of hard coal). It is staggering how fast the industry has grown and evolved since then.

Moving on to the present day, Drews manages to achieve the difficult balancing act of effectively explaining the process of drug development and the impact of molecular biology and genomics in modern drug discovery for the scientist and non-scientist alike. The more technical issues are discussed with clarity, and should the reader ever struggle, a glossary is included.

It is certainly an easier task for anyone to describe the past and present than to foresee the future. However, Drews is a renowned author of strategic treatises on the future of the industry and, in particular, has applied

scientific processes to the analysis of drug development itself. The book sets out the challenges facing the modern industry; in particular, the difficulties of reconciling the spiraling costs of drug development, governmental cost controls and productivity within the industry. Implications for the dynamics of the different sectors within and around the industry are explored (marketing, research, development, biotechnology, academia and others), and the author conjectures on scenarios facing an industry whose research base is attenuating and being usurped by smaller, more fleet-of-foot organizations.

This is a well-rounded account of the birth of an industry, how the industrial model evolved and functioned, and how this established model no longer works well. It is written in a style that is intelligent and can be understood by a wide audience. More than that, it makes a good 'story'. I would recommend it as a great backgrounder for anyone associated with the development of medicines.

*David Hughes*

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