

defence against infection, transplantation immunology and blood group serology. Although containing valuable information much of this material might be considered more relevant in a textbook of immunology. The account of the complement-system proteins does not include more recent knowledge relating to their structure.

The section on proteins of coagulation and fibrinolysis has an authoritative account of the structure of fibrinogen and of the various domains associated with its reactivity to thrombin, factor XIII and plasmin. The description of the vitamin K-dependent clotting factors and the impact of γ -carboxy glutamic acid on their functioning is fascinating as are also the structural similarities emerging between them and plasminogen.

Snake Venoms

Edited by Chen-Yuan Lee
Springer; Berlin, Heidelberg, New York, 1979
xxxiii + 1130 pages. \$269.50, DM 490.00

This work represents the most complete review of our knowledge on snake venoms available at the present time. The text is generally well written and does not suffer from the fate experienced by so many multi-authored books, that of uneven style and layout. Most of the chapters contain well-assimilated information avoiding the inclusion of too much original data. Only chapters 5 and 14, on the chemistry of protein toxins and on haemorrhagins, respectively, can be faulted on this score. Chapters are well-referenced in the main; only chapter 10 on the effects of venom on nerve and muscle contains a poorly critical and unselected bibliography. There are two particularly useful sections; one of four chapters on the clinical aspects of snake bite and one group of four chapters on immunological aspects. This latter section provides a comprehensive and up-to-date survey of anti-venin production, snake venom-complement interaction and vaccination against envenomation. Only one chapter is disappointing, that by Seegers and Ouyang on snake venoms and

I found the reference system cumbersome, the references being listed at the end of the book under the names of the authors of individual subsections. A large proportion of the references are to review articles rather than to original sources; some references mentioned in the text are missing from the final lists. There appears to have been no systematic attempt to up-date the references from the 1976 Swedish edition. There is a subject but no author index.

The scope of this monograph is necessarily more restricted than the three volume 'The Plasma Proteins' edited by F. W. Putnam, however it is written from a rather different and interesting point of view.

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blood coagulation. In the first part of the chapter, the authors largely ignore the internationally-agreed conventions for blood coagulation factor nomenclature, instituting Dr Seeger's own terminology and theory for prothrombin conversion. Their subsequent discussion of snake venoms and coagulation is satisfactory.

There is no doubt that this work will become a major reference book for workers in the field but at a price of around £130 it must be beyond the resources of individuals and even some libraries. We may find that this expensive book will not compete satisfactorily with the work by Anthony Tu (*Venoms, chemistry and molecular biology*, published by Wiley, 1977) which although more limited in scope, is a good buy at around £30. Furthermore this latter book is suitable for the worker new to the field and experienced scientists alike whereas Lee's book is more for the specialist.

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