

BOOK NOTICES

The Mast Cell in Health and Disease. M A Kaliner and D D Metcalfe. (Pp858; \$195.00). New York: Marcel Dekker, 1993. 0 8247 8732 3

Over the past decade there have been many advances in several aspects of an understanding of the biology of the mast cell. The possibility of culturing mast cells, the discovery of several growth factors responsible for mast cells, the recognition of mast cell heterogeneity, the cloning of the IgE receptor and the identification of a wide array of mediators and, more recently, of cytokines that may be released from these mast cells have been major strides that have re-emphasised the potential for the mast cell in initiating and participating in immunological and inflammatory responses in various tissues. This volume is a comprehensive review of the biology of the mast cell in health and disease and of its potential involvement in various diseases such as asthma, urticaria, food allergy, parasitic infestations, arthritis, scleroderma, and systemic mast cell disease. Approximately half of the 32 chapters deal with the basic aspects of mast cell ultrastructure, function, development, heterogeneity and release of mediators/cytokines, while the remaining chapters focus on the potential contribution of mast cells to disease. Because the production of this book resulted from a meeting, the editors have included the discussion that ensued amongst the contributors following each presentation. This section often gives insight into the uncertainties in some areas at the forefront of mast cell research. This book is volume 62 in the Lung Biology in Health and Disease series and can certainly be considered as the definitive comprehensive state-of-the-art work to be entirely devoted to the mast cell. Although the latest references quoted are up to 1991, it will remain the authoritative reference work on the mast cell for many years to come. It should be of interest to a wide audience of researchers across many disciplines, particularly to those involved in asthma, allergy and immunology, and in pharmacology. The clinician will also find many of the chapters relating mast cells to disease of interest. At nearly £130 this book should be made available in any respectable library, although anyone with more than a passing interest in mast cell research or mast cell related disease should consider investing in a copy.—FC

Radiology of Thoracic Trauma. Paul Stark. (Pp166; £50). Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann, 1992. 1 56372 044 3.

This slim single author book contains material condensed from an instructional course given over five years at the Radiological Society of North America meetings. The book is divided into 11 short chapters covering all the forms of thoracic trauma likely to be encountered in modern America. Given that each topic is essentially a summary of the course material, the coverage of the different entities is a little uneven. For example, the chapter on chest cage injuries is devoted almost entirely to rib fractures and their sequelae; there is no mention of imaging of the traumatised vertebral

column—a challenging area to evaluate by plain film or cross sectional imaging. The similarly difficult area of tracheobronchial fracture also deserves fuller coverage. These small deficiencies do not diminish the many good things in this book: there is an outstanding section on lung injury which includes a particularly clear and well illustrated section on lung contusion, laceration, and haematoma. An important chapter on the imaging of the potentially ruptured thoracic aorta is also a model of clarity. All aspects of thoracic trauma are generously illustrated and this reflects the author's great personal experience (readers will want to congratulate the author on his collection of such dramatic illustrative material and for staying the course in such a dangerous place). The high quality of the radiographs and computed tomograms, many of which must have been obtained in extreme circumstances, are a tribute to the radiographers who took them. Further evidence of the author's interest and authority on thoracic trauma is shown in the number of his contributions to the literature in the lists of references at the end of each chapter. The size of this "short monograph", as the author calls it, lends itself to rapid absorption and a great deal can be gained from it in a short time. As a consequence it is, quite appropriately for such a didactic book, only lightly referenced. In an ideal world every casualty department would have a copy of this book and every admitting doctor would have read it.—DMH

Signal Transduction in Lung Cells. Jerome S Brody, David M Center, Vsevolod A Tkachuk. (Pp704; \$195.00). New York: Marcel Dekker, 1993. 0 8247 8813 3.

This is the 65th in the impressive series of Lung Biology in Health and Disease. The topic chosen by Claude Lenfant for this volume is a rapidly advancing topic concerning the pathways involved in cellular responses to both external and internal messages. The authors are primarily from the USA and the former USSR, and the volume arose from international collaboration and a subsequent scientific meeting. The field of intracellular signalling has shown great advances over the last 10 years and a complex pathway of events, somewhat reminiscent of the Krebs cycle, has evolved. This is therefore a difficult field to make user friendly. The book consists of eight basic introductory chapters. Unfortunately the first is full of jargon, abbreviations and moves too rapidly from the simple scheme outlined in the first table (perhaps this reflects the multiple authorship). Thus, the first impression tends to confirm the view of the non-expert that this is a complex field that they may never wish to understand. However, the second chapter provides a better introduction and an extensive review on the regulation, structure and function of G protein linked receptors. The remaining introductory chapters are extensive reviews with historical perspectives and experimental detective work providing a background that is most relevant to scientists wishing to enter the field of signalling. The second section concerns epithelial cells where work has been less extensive. The application of the basic concepts is in its infancy, but these chapters are generally very readable with the exception of chapter 11 on growth factors which suffers from the lack of any tables or figures. The remaining sections relate to

smooth muscle cells, endothelial cells, and cells of the immune system (macrophages, lymphocytes, and mast cells). The chapters cover the role of cytokines, G proteins, protein kinases, and phosphatases in a way that may be more relevant to the clinical scientist. In summary, this is predominantly a reference book to be dipped into rather than read, except by the dedicated or training scientist in the field. However, the mechanisms involved are going to be relevant to all scientists studying cell biology whatever their disease or cell of interest. Some sections, however, would undoubtedly benefit from some or more simple diagrams or tables. Nevertheless this volume is a welcome addition to the series, although its topic and overall price will lead to a restricted market. It should be recommended for most medical libraries.—RS

NOTICES

2nd Central European Conference on Lung Cancer

The 2nd Central European Conference on Lung Cancer, under the auspices of the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer, will take place on 13–16 April 1994 at the Congress Centre, Ljubljana, Slovenia. For further details contact: Professor Janez J Orel, Department of Thoracic Surgery, University Medical Centre, Zaloška 7, 61105 Ljubljana, Slovenia. Telephone: +38 61 317 582. Fax: +38 61 116 006.

IInd International Meeting in General Thoracic Surgery

The IInd International Meeting in General Thoracic Surgery will be held in Barcelona on 6 and 7 October 1994. For further information contact the Congress Secretariat, RCT asociados, Aulèstia i Pijoan 12 baixos, 08012 Barcelona, Spain. Telephone: 34-3-415 69 38. Fax: 34-3-415 69 04.

International Congress for Lung Cancer

The International Congress for Lung Cancer will be held on 22–26 June 1994. For further information contact Ms Poppy Katevati, Congress Manager, Olympic Sun SA, Athens, Greece. Telephone: 30-1-3230083. Fax: 30-1-3229194.

CORRECTIONS

Time course and duration of broncho-dilatation with formoterol dry powder in patients with stable asthma

In the paper by A Wallin *et al* (June 1993;48:611–4) we regret an error on page 611 in the Results section of the Abstract, line 8 which should read "... was sustained for 6 hours and 16 minutes with salbutamol 400 µg...".

Lung function in white children aged 4 to 19 years: II—Single breath analysis and plethysmography

In the paper by M Rosenthal *et al* (August 1993;48:803–8) the regression equation for VA in females (column F, table 2) on page 805 should read -7.669615×10^{-7} .